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ABSTRACT

The concept of writing as process has revolutionized the way many view composition, and this book is organized by the stages of that process. Each section begins with a well-known author presenting specific techniques, followed by commentaries which include testimonials, applications of writing techniques, and descriptions of strategy modifications all contributed by classroom teachers. The book includes the following sections and initial chapters: Section 1 (The Process): "Teaching Writing as a Process" (Catherine D'Aoust); Section 2 (Prewriting): "Clustering: A Prewriting Process" (Gabriele Lusser Rico); Section 3 (Prewriting in Different Subjects): "Prewriting Assignments Across the Curriculum" (Jim Lee); Section 4 (Showing, Not Telling): "A Training Program for Student Writers" (Rebekah Caplan); Section 5 (Using Cooperative Learning to Facilitate Writing): "Using Structures to Promote Cooperative Learning in Writing" (Jeanne M. Stone and Spencer S. Kagan); Section 6 (Writing): "Developing a Sense of Audience, or Who Am I Really Writing This Paper For?" (Mark K. Healy); Section 7 (Teaching Writing in the Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Classroom): "English Learners and Writing: Responding to Linguistic Diversity" (Robin Scarcella); Section 8 (Domains of Writing): "Teaching the Domains of Writing" (Nancy McHugh); Section 9 (Writing the Saturation Report): "Using Fictional Techniques for Nonfiction Writing" (Ruby Bernstein); Section 10 (Point of View in Writing): "A Lesson on Point of View...That Works" (Carol Booth Olson); Section 11 (Writing the I-Search Paper): "The Reawakening of Curiosity: Research Papers as Hunting Stories" (Ken Macrorie); Section 12 (Critical Thinking and Writing): "Reforming Your Teaching for Thinking: The Studio Approach" (Dan Kirby); Section 13 (Sharing/Responding): "Some Guidelines for Writing-Response Groups" (Peter Elbow); Section 14 (Reader Responses): "Dialogue with a Text" (Robert E. Probst); Section 15 (RAGs for Sharing/Responding): "Using Read-Around Groups to Establish Criteria for Good Writing" (Jenee Gossard); Section 16 (Rewriting/Editing): "Competence for Performance in Revision" (Sheridan Blau); Section 17 (Revising for Correctness): "Some Basics That Really Do Lead to Correctness" (Irene Thomas); Section 18 (Building Vocabularies): "Word-Sprouting: A Vocabulary-Building Strategy for Remedial Writers"

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(Barbara Morton); Section 19 (Evaluation): "Holistic Scoring in the Classroom" (Glenn Patchell); and Section 20 (Evaluation Techniques): "Some Techniques for Oral Evaluation" (Michael O'Brien). Contains over 100 references. (EF)

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Practical Ideas

FOR TEACHING WRITING AS A PROCESS AT THE HIGH SCHOOL AND COLLEGE LEVELS

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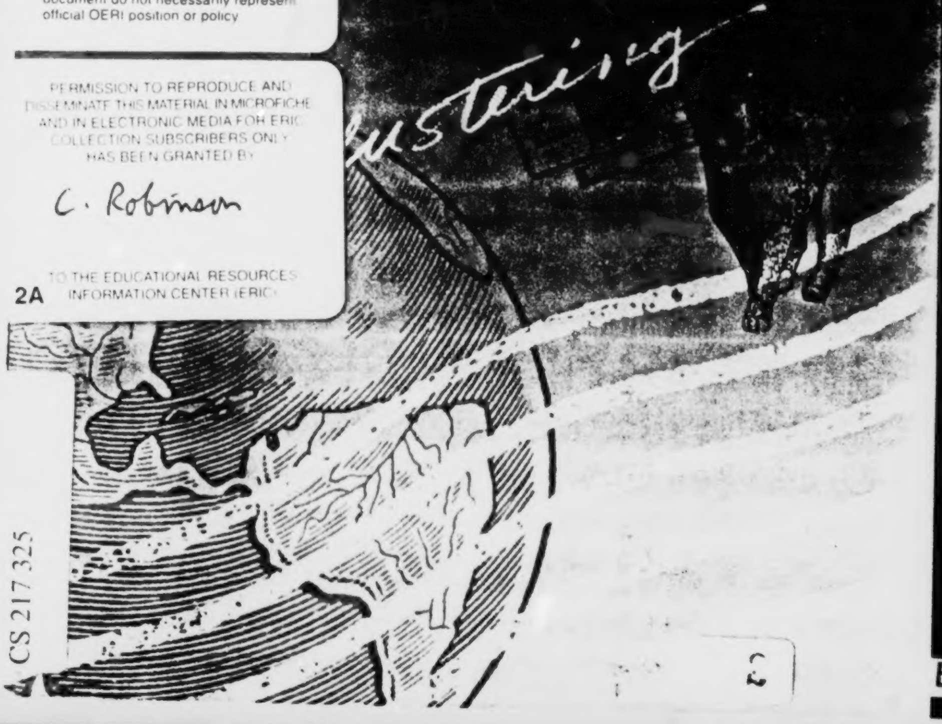

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Practical Ideas

FOR TEACHING WRITING AS A PROCESS AT THE HIGH SCHOOL AND COLLEGE LEVELS

1997 REVISED
EDITION

Compiled and edited by
Carol Booth Olson
Director, University of California, Irvine/
California Writing Project

Prepared for publication by
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Practical Ideas for Teaching Writing as a Process at the High School and College Levels was compiled and edited by Carol Booth Olson, Director of the University of California, Irvine/California Writing Project. Theodore R. Smith, former Editor in Chief of the California Department of Education's Bureau of Publications (now CDE Press), did the initial planning and preparation of this revised edition and of the revised edition for elementary schools and middle schools, which is also available. Preliminary reviews of the material were provided by Mae Gundlach, Diane Levin, and Kathi Cooper, Consultants, from the Language Arts and Foreign Languages Office of the Department and by Dan Holt, Consultant, Bilingual Education Office.

It was edited for publication by Stephanie Prescott and Janet Lundin, Associate Editors, CDE Press, California Department of Education. The book, which presents techniques and practical ideas for teaching students the stages in the writing process, was first published by the Department in 1986 as a companion to the *Handbook for Planning an Effective Writing Program*. This edition of the book was completely revised and expanded to include new articles with new techniques and practical ideas for teaching writing in elementary schools and middle schools. A new design for the cover and interior and new illustrations were also created.

Practical Ideas was prepared for photo-offset production by the staff of CDE Press. Cheryl McDonald, Senior Graphic Artist, designed the cover and the interior and prepared the artwork. The typesetters were Anna Boyd, Jeannette Huff, Carey Johnson, and Donna Kurtz.

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Prepared for publication
by CSEA members

Dedication

This book is dedicated to

George Nemetz

former English–Language Arts Consultant,
California Department of Education,

and

Theodore R. Smith

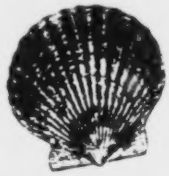
former Editor in Chief, Bureau of Publications,
California Department of Education,
for their many contributions to the enhancement
of English–language arts curriculum
and instruction in California.

Contents

Preface vii
Acknowledgments ix
Introduction xi

The California Writing Project—James R. Gray xi
"We Are All Out-of-Date Scientists": New Language Research Since You Left School—Owen Thomas xiii

The Process



Teaching Writing as a Process—Catherine D'Aoust 1

PRACTICAL IDEAS FOR TEACHING WRITING AS A PROCESS

How Do You *Really* Write?—Susan Starbuck 5
Establishing a Community of Writers—Martha Johnson 6
Introducing Teachers to the Concept of Writing as a Process—Sue Rader Willett 7
The Demonstration Lesson—Paulette Morgan 10
Talking Students Through the Thinking-Writing Process—Jerry Judd 12

Prewriting

Clustering: A Prewriting Process—Gabriele Lusser Rico 14

PRACTICAL IDEAS FOR USING CLUSTERING IN THE PREWRITING STAGE

It Works!—Elizabeth B. Martinez 18
Using Clustering as a Study Skill—Susan Starbuck 18
Propagating Clusters—Michael O'Brien 20

Prewriting in Different Subjects

Prewriting Assignments Across the Curriculum—Jim Lee 21

PRACTICAL IDEAS FOR PREWRITING IN DIFFERENT SUBJECTS

Developing Fluency Through Poetic Dialogue—Michael Carr and Erline S. Krebs 24
Journal Writing Across the Curriculum—Margaret Serences 26
Guided Imagery in the Social Studies—Dale Sprowl 27
Mailbags and Miscellany: Writing in History Classes—Laurel Corona 28
Just a Few Words on Sentence Combining Across the Curriculum—William Lomax 29
Snake in the Grass: An Integrated Approach to Concept Formation—Carl Babb and Todd Huck 31
Writing to Learn Mathematics—Ed Isaacs 35

Showing, Not Telling

A Training Program for Student Writers—Rebekah Caplan 39

PRACTICAL IDEAS FOR TRAINING STUDENTS TO SHOW, NOT TELL

Showing, Not Telling: Setting, Characterization, Conflict—Laurie Opfell 46
Integrating Clustering and Showing, Not Telling—Carol Booth Olson 49
Showing, Not Telling: A Stepping-Stone Toward Expository Writing—Julie Simpson 51
Writing About Literature with Showing, Not Telling—William Burns 53
Showing, Not Telling, About *The Canterbury Tales*—Sue Ellen Gold 55

Using Cooperative Learning to Facilitate Writing

Using Structures to Promote Cooperative Learning in Writing—Jeanne M. Stone and Spencer S. Kagan 58

PRACTICAL IDEAS FOR USING COOPERATIVE LEARNING TO FACILITATE WRITING

Implementing Cooperative Learning in a Native American Classroom—Reba McLaughlin 65
Fostering Peer Response Groups Through Cooperative Learning—Russell Frank 66

Writing

Developing a Sense of Audience, or Who Am I Really Writing This Paper For?—Mary K. Healy 73

PRACTICAL IDEAS FOR DEVELOPING A SENSE OF AUDIENCE

An Exercise to Introduce the Concept of Audience to Students and Teachers—Lynda Chittenden 77
Learning Logs—Mindy Moffatt 78
Telecommunications: A Powerful Tool for Facilitating Writing to a Distant Audience—Steven Pinney 81

Teaching Writing in the Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Classroom

English Learners and Writing: Responding to Linguistic Diversity—Robin Scarcella 85

PRACTICAL IDEAS FOR TEACHING WRITING IN THE CULTURALLY AND LINGUISTICALLY DIVERSE CLASSROOM

The Missing Piece: Enhancing Self-Esteem Through Exposure to Culturally Diverse Literature—Pamela W. Jones 92
A Literature Unit of Study About Vietnamese Children—Lea Kiapos 93
My Name, My Self—Brenda Borron 95
Teaching Writing in a Culturally Diverse, Heterogeneous Classroom—Pat Clark 97
Adapting the Writing-as-Process Model to the Different Learning Styles in an ESL College Composition Classroom—Bonita Nahoum Jaros 100
Getting Off Track: Core Literature for All Students—Mifanwy Patricia Kaiser and Michelle Lindfors 104
Providing an Audience for ESL Students and a Reason to Write—Carolyn Mendoza 109

Domains of Writing

Teaching the Domains of Writing—Nancy McHugh 112

PRACTICAL IDEAS FOR TEACHING THE DOMAINS OF WRITING

Expanding the Different Domains of Writing—Julie Simpson 119
Using Visual Stimuli to Motivate Reluctant Writers and to Foster Descriptive Writing Skills—Sue Rader Willett 125
Guided Imagery in the Sensory/Descriptive and Imaginative/Narrative Domains—Dale Sprowl 126
Sequencing to Music: The Narrative Domain—Mike Conlon 127
How to Do "How To"—Greta Nagel 129
The Bumper Sticker Approach to the Topic Sentence for Opinion Writing—Trudy J. Burrus 131
Welcome to the New World!—Laurie Opfell 133

Writing the Saturation Report

Using Fictional Techniques for Nonfiction Writing—Ruby Bernstein 135

PRACTICAL IDEAS FOR ASSIGNING THE SATURATION REPORT

Preparing Students to Write the Saturation Report—Carol Booth Olson 138
The Saturation Research Paper—Catherine D'Aoust 142

Point of View in Writing

A Lesson on Point of View . . . That Works—Carol Booth Olson 145

PRACTICAL IDEAS FOR TEACHING POINT OF VIEW

Teaching Point of View Through Characters from a Novel—Elizabeth Williams Reeves 149
An Inside Look at Fear: Point of View in *The Crucible*—Julie Simpson 150

Writing the I-Search Paper

The Reawakening of Curiosity: Research Papers as Hunting Stories—Ken Macrorie 152

PRACTICAL IDEAS FOR USING THE I-SEARCH PAPER

My Search—Laurie Opfell 155
A Sample Prompt, Scoring Guide, and Model Paper for the I-Search—Carol Booth Olson 156
The I-Search Paper: A Perfect Compromise—Susanna Clemans 161
Research Made Fun: Students' Responses to the I-Search Paper—Joan Bower 162
The Extinction of Termpapasaurus Rex: The Rise of Text-Based Research—Carol Jago 163
"I-Search a Word": Reclaiming the Library's Reference Section—Gaylyn Anderson 165

Critical Thinking and Writing

Reforming Your Teaching for Thinking: The Studio Approach—Dan Kirby 168

PRACTICAL IDEAS FOR TEACHING CRITICAL THINKING AND WRITING

Adapting Dan Kirby's Portfolio to the Study of a Novel—Esther Severy 174
Weaving an Autobiographical Web from Kirby's "Spider Pieces"—Julie Simpson 180
Critical Thinking: The Lure of Literature's Beyond—Linette Thomas 186
What the Text Says—What the Text Means to Me: Using the Dialectical Journal as a Tool for Critical Thinking—Sheila Koff 187
Tapping Multiple Intelligences Through the Literature Book Project—Carol Booth Olson 192

Sharing/Responding

Some Guidelines for Writing-Response Groups—Peter Elbow 197

PRACTICAL IDEAS FOR SHARING/RESPONDING

At First . . . And at Last—Julie Simpson 202
Response Groups in the Business Writing Class—Sheila Koff 203

Reader Responses

Dialogue with a Text—Robert E. Probst 205

PRACTICAL IDEAS FOR READER RESPONSES

Reader Response Logs—Jenee Gossard 212
Strategies for Interacting with a Text—Carol Booth Olson 216
Demystifying the Essay: The Reader's Response to Nonfiction—Laura Stokes 223
Sharing What Belongs to You: Minilessons and Lit Letters—Joni Chancer 226

RAGs for Sharing/Responding

Using Read-Around Groups to Establish Criteria for Good Writing—Jenee Gossard 231

PRACTICAL IDEAS FOR READ-AROUND GROUPS

Students' Reactions to the Read-Around—Sheila Koff 235
Using Read-Around Groups in a Biology Class—Judith Sanderson 236
Using Read-Around Groups for Holistic Scoring—Trudy J. Burrus 237

Rewriting/Editing

Competence for Performance in Revision—Sheridan Blau 239

PRACTICAL IDEAS FOR REVISING

Stages in the Revising Process—Michael O'Brien 245
Yes, There Is a Better Way: Revising on the Word Processor—Russell Frank 246
Revising with Sentence Combining—Jerry Judd 248
Two Activities That Encourage Real Revision—Trudy J. Burrus 250
Skill-Building Strategies for the Reluctant Writer—Rebekah Caplan 250
Learning Prose Surgery Through Given-Language Activities—William Strong 255

Revising for Correctness

Some Basics That Really Do Lead to Correctness—Irene Thomas 260

PRACTICAL IDEAS ON REVISING FOR CORRECTNESS

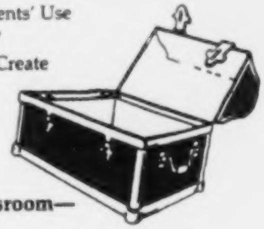
Making Correctness Creative: The "Snurdles" Project—Sandra Barnes 265
Teaching Correctness with Competition Day—Russell Frank 267
Creative Practice with Sentence Patterns—Laurie Opfell 268

Building Vocabularies

Word-Sprouting: A Vocabulary-Building Strategy for Remedial Writers—Barbara Morton 270

PRACTICAL IDEAS FOR BUILDING VOCABULARIES

Deceptive Definitions: Making the Dictionary a Treasure Chest—Mindy Moffatt 274
Teaching Vocabulary Through Competition—Michael O'Brien 276
Verbal Density: Expanding Students' Use of Verbs—Evelyn Ching 277
MADDOG: Choosing Nouns to Create a Dominant Impression—Scott Edwards Silva 280



Evaluation

Holistic Scoring in the Classroom—Glenn Patchell 282

PRACTICAL IDEAS FOR USING HOLISTIC SCORING

Holistic Scoring: The Good News and the Bad—Michael O'Brien 286
Compromising with an Ideal: Rubrics Based on Grades—Charles Schiller 287
Primary Trait Scoring—Virginia Bergquist 288
Making Paper Marking Matter—Robert Land 290

Evaluation Techniques

Some Techniques for Oral Evaluation—Michael O'Brien 294

PRACTICAL IDEAS FOR EVALUATION

Teaching Self-Evaluation Skills to Student Writers—Carol O. Sweedler-Brown 296
The Writing Folder: A System for Responding to Students' Writing—Jim Hahn 297
Adding an Analytical Commentary to Holistic Scoring—Carol Booth Olson 300
Portfolio Assessment—Catherine D'Aoust 301

Selected References

Literature 303
Other Sources 305
Publications About Writing 305

Preface

If you are looking for ideas for teaching writing as a process at the high school and college levels, this book was compiled for you. It represents the collaborative efforts of teacher/consultants participating in the University of California, Irvine, California Writing Project and of special guest contributors. Their articles present some of the most innovative and effective strategies for teaching writing that have been presented over the past 17 years at our annual Summer Institute on the Teaching of Composition.

When the original version of *Practical Ideas for Teaching Writing as a Process* was released in 1986, the early stages of a reform movement in language arts instruction had begun in California. During this movement the *Model Curriculum Standards, Grades Nine Through Twelve,* which includes standards for English/language arts, and the *English–Language Arts Framework for California Public Schools, Kindergarten Through Grade Twelve* were published. One outcome of these efforts is that the initial *Aha!* that writing is a process evolved into the broader concept that learning is a process. I would like to think that the California Writing Project, and perhaps even *Practical Ideas* itself, which has been used by over 100,000 teachers and others, contributed to the shift in emphasis from learning to read and write to reading and writing to learn and to our emerging sense that literacy is not the possession of minimal competency or basic skills but the development of a richer, deeper, and more integrated base of understanding and knowledge. We emphasize that students must know not only *what* the curriculum consists of but also *how* to solve problems and make their own meaning from what they learn.

As Dan Kirby says elsewhere in this publication, "If you are going to develop your students as thinkers, you must begin to look at knowledge and knowing in new ways." He goes on to say that this new view of knowledge does not mean that you have nothing to teach students or that textbooks are no longer valuable. What it does mean is that we have to plan for and structure our classrooms in such a way that students construct their own versions of old knowledge in new and more personal ways. Many of the new selections in *Practical Ideas* directly reflect this notion that genuine teaching and learning involve not just *transmission* but *transaction*. Reader response strategies, ideas for infusing cooperative learning into the classroom, multiple intelligence projects, alternatives to what Carol Jago has called the "termpapasauras rex," portfolio assessment and reflection, and an array of interactive strategies to help the growing number of culturally diverse and limited-English-proficient students in California make meaning from their educational experience all embody this constructivist approach.

Because the concept of writing as a process has revolutionized the way in which so many of us view the act of composing and is still at the heart of how we structure our classes and design our learning activities, the stages of that process—prewriting, writing, sharing and responding, revising, rewriting, editing, and evaluating—remain the most logical organization for this publication. Each section of the book begins with a well-known author/teacher presenting specific techniques for highlighting one of the stages of the writing process. After the description of each technique, commentaries are presented in which you will find testimonials, applications of writing techniques at particular grade levels, descriptions of ways to modify the strategies presented for specific audiences, new ideas that sprang from an original idea, and variations on a theme—all contributed by classroom teachers. These commentaries are intended for your use as points of departure as you experiment with the suggested approaches and develop your own curriculum.

For further study of the topics covered in *Practical Ideas*, you may want to consult the list of selected resources at the end of this publication. Here you will find citations for all sources used in the book—works of literature, works from other disciplines, and publications about writing. In this section, works of literature are cited below the titles of the articles in which they appear.

One of the most rewarding dimensions of the California Writing Project and the National Writing Project is the spirit of sharing inherent in the teachers-teaching-teachers model initiated by James R. Gray, founder of the Bay Area, California, and National Writing Projects, and discussed by him as part of the introduction to this book. This publication might be considered a product of the process of sharing that takes place at every writing project site. But it is not meant as a replacement for that process. In fact, we hope it will encourage you to become involved in a summer institute or other available workshops and conferences in your area. Take what you can use, use what you take to supplement what you already know and do well, and make the ideas that are presented your own by adapting them to your unique teaching style and classroom situation.

CAROL BOOTH OLSON
Director, UCI Writing Project

Acknowledgments

Practical Ideas for Teaching Writing as a Process at the High School and College Levels represents the work of many dedicated people over a period of several years. And first, we thank all of the contributing authors whose work appears on the following pages. It was your practical and innovative ideas for teaching writing and your spirit of sharing that made this book a reality. On behalf of all those teachers who will benefit from your generous contributions, we thank you:

Gaylyn Anderson, Carl Babb, Sandra Barnes, Virginia Bergquist, Ruby Bernstein, Sheridan Blau, Brenda Borron, Joan Bower, Carol O. Sweedler-Brown, William Burns, Trudy J. Burrus, Rebekah Caplan, Michael Carr, Joni Chancer, Evelyn Ching, Lynda Chittenden, Pat Clark, Susanna Clemans, Mike Conlon, Laurel Corona, Catherine D'Aoust, Scott Edwards, Peter Elbow, Russell Frank, Sue Ellen Gold, Jenee Gossard, James R. Gray, Jim Hahn, Mary K. Healy, Todd Huck, Ed Issacs, Carol Jago, Bonita Nahoum Jaros, Martha Johnson, Pamela W. Jones, Jerry Judd, Spencer S. Kagan, Mifanwy Patricia Kaiser, Lea Kiapos, Dan Kirby, Sheila Koff, Erline S. Krebs, Robert Land, Jim Lee, Michelle Lindfors, William Lomax, Nancy McHugh, Reba McLaughlin, Ken Macrorie, Elizabeth B. Martinez, Carolyn Mendoza, Mindy Moffatt, Paulett Morgan, Barbara Morton, Greta Nagel, Michael O'Brien, Carol Booth Olson, Laurie Opfell, Glenn Patchell, Steven Pinney, Robert E. Probst, Elizabeth Williams Reeves, Gabriele Lusser Rico, Judith Sanderson, Robin Scarcella, Charles Schiller, Margaret Serences, Esther Severy, Julie Simpson, Dale Sprowl, Susan Starbuck, Laura Stokes, Jeanne M. Stone, William Strong, Irene Thomas, Linette Thomas, Owen Thomas, and Sue Rader Willett.

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Introduction

The California Writing Project

By James R. Gray

Founder, Bay Area, California,
and National Writing Projects

The California Writing Project (CWP) is designed to improve the writing of students in California by improving the teaching of writing in the classroom. Teachers teaching other teachers is the project's essential component. Each year over 30,000 teachers from all levels of instruction and regions of the state participate in a variety of summer and school-year programs sponsored by the 17 local writing projects in the statewide CWP network. Each of the projects in the network is established according to the staff development model of the Bay Area Writing Project and is united with the other projects through a common commitment to a set of key assumptions:

- Universities and schools can work together as partners in a cooperative effort to solve the writing problems common to both levels. New collegial and nonhierarchical relationships among professors, instructors, and teachers are essential; the top-down tradition of past university / school programs is no longer useful as a staff development model.
- Many teachers have developed effective approaches to the teaching of writing. These successful teachers can be identified. They can be brought together through summer institutes to learn how to teach other teachers of writing in project-sponsored programs conducted throughout the school year on college campuses and in school districts.
- The best teachers of teachers are other teachers who are believable as consultants because their ideas and the specific teaching strategies they demonstrate have been developed with students in the classroom.
- Teachers need to experience regularly what they are asking of their students and to discover and understand, through their own writing, the process (of writing) they are teaching.
- Change in classroom practice happens over time. Effective professional development programs are ongoing and systematic—programs that make it possible for teachers to come together regularly throughout their careers to evaluate the best practices of other teachers.
- Effective programs to improve student writing involve teachers at all grade levels and in all content areas. Using writing as a means of discovery and a way of learning is a compelling approach for teachers across the curriculum and across grade levels.
- What is known about the teaching of writing comes not only from research but also from the practice of those who teach writing.

In the summer institutes selected teachers are invited to college campuses as university Fellows and given modest stipends to cover expenses. These teachers demonstrate the specific teaching strategies they have found successful with their own students and, typically, involve the audience of Fellows as students. The demonstrations are considered not only for their effectiveness as approaches to writing but also for their effectiveness as demonstrations. For many teachers in the institutes, this is the first time in their careers that they have ever been asked to present what they know to another teacher. In addition to making demonstrations, teachers examine research and key texts in the field of written composition, work with occasional outside guest speakers, and meet regularly in small editing/response groups to share and examine their own manuscripts. All teachers submit articles for an anthology, which is prepared at the close of the institute.

The intensive five weeks are only a beginning. Participation in the California Writing Project does not stop with the summer institute; it continues with regular follow-up programs that include monthly meetings that bring together summer Fellows from all past institutes to continue the experience of the summer institute. The most important follow-up programs sponsored by the California Writing Project are the professional development workshops held throughout the school year in school districts near each CWP site. Conducted by the teachers from the summer institutes, these workshops are usually three-hour sessions spaced throughout the year. It is in these school district workshops and in the variety of other programs sponsored by the CWP sites that the California Writing Project achieves the ripple effect that now influences teachers in every region of California.

At least twice a year, the directors and codirectors of the 17 CWP sites meet to discuss their programs and to explore common issues. From these meetings all of those persons involved in the writing project movement in California get a sense of its continuing momentum and ever-increasing scope. Most sites now offer several programs beyond the summer institutes and the school year follow-up programs—programs for teachers of English language learners, programs for teachers in urban centers, summer programs open to all teachers who wish to participate in a CWP program, programs on special topics such as portfolio assessment, and teacher research programs. Many sites also offer programs for young writers, parents, and administrators. Increasingly, the writing project is asked to conduct writing-across-the-curriculum workshops for the entire faculty of a school. To meet this need, teachers from the various disciplines who use writing to learn are participating in the summer institutes in greater numbers.

One outgrowth of the California Writing Project is that the number and variety of publications have increased over the years. Most sites distribute quarterly newsletters to their CWP Fellows, and many publish anthologies of writing from students and teachers. Still others are producing monographs and disseminating occasional papers on some of the best practices in the teaching of writing that have originated from their respective summer institutes.

One publication effort was the development of the California Department of Education's *Handbook for Planning an Effective Writing Program*, first published in 1981. Working cooperatively with personnel from offices of county superintendents of schools and the Department of Education, representatives from 15 California Writing Project sites contributed their expertise to the creation of that document. Accordingly, the *Handbook* reflects the basic tenets of the California Writing Project:

- Writing is a tool for learning because it fosters thinking skills.
- As a learning tool, writing can be encouraged across the curriculum.
- The teacher creates an environment that is conducive to learning and to establishing a community of writers; assigning writing is not the same thing as teaching writing.
- Good teachers of writing, themselves, write; good teachers are, themselves, learners.
- Writing, itself, is a process; the act of transforming thought into print involves a nonlinear sequence of creative acts or stages.
- The goal of instruction in writing is to enable students to develop skills in fluency, form, and correctness. Fluency is stressed first because students must be able to produce text before they can edit it.

Building on and complementing the efforts of the *Handbook*, the collection of *Practical Ideas for Teaching Writing as a Process*, developed by the University of California, Irvine/California Writing Project, offers a host of how-to strategies for implementing the basic tenets of the California Writing Project. Like the summer institutes from which its articles and commentaries spring, *Practical Ideas* focuses on what works and why; the authorities are teachers teaching teachers.

Teachers teaching teachers. That is our model for success. The California Writing Project works because it puts a premium on discovering successful practices in the teaching and learning of writing. Its staff development model is not the familiar deficit model that treats teachers as if they were diseased, damaged, and in need of repair. Instead, the model celebrates good teaching and enhances the professional status of teachers. Teachers come to these university-based programs not as students but as colleagues, recognized as authorities in classroom practice, who bring their unique source of knowledge about the teaching of writing. Their commitment, enthusiasm, and desire to share is at the heart of the California Writing Project.

"We Are All Out-of-Date Scientists": New Language Research Since You Left School

By Owen Thomas
Former Professor, English, Linguistics, and Teacher Education, University of California, Irvine;
and Former Codirector, UCI Writing Project

In one of S. J. Perelman's books, a character says, "We are all out-of-date scientists." I would like to explain what I think the author meant by that and then to suggest how that meaning relates to teachers of writing.

Mr. Perelman expanded on the statement by saying that our ideas of science are based on the last course we had in a particular science in school. With a very few exceptions, most of us are out-of-date, rather than up-to-date, concerning recent developments in various fields of science. Even scientists are often out-of-date in fields not directly related to their own. Physicists, for example, are often out-of-date in a field such as sociobiology. Organic chemists may well be out-of-date in mathematics. And if this is true for scientists, it is all the more true for most of us who are not working in science every day.

For example, most people assume they have at least some idea of the meaning of infinity. Many people even remember the mathematical symbol for infinity: . But what most people do not know—unless they have kept up with recent developments in mathematics—is that some infinities are larger than other infinities and that there is, in fact, a subbranch of mathematics called the mathematics of infinity.

The point of the preceding example is this: Often, we all sometimes *think* we know a fair amount about a particular subject when, in fact, we are out-of-date. And the fact is that many teachers of writing are out-of-date in some important ways, and I will suggest a few of them. Other contributors to this book will suggest other ways, but none of us knew about these important developments until a few years ago. However, all of us believe that these developments have significant implications for the teaching of composition.

In the next few paragraphs, I will be concerned with two subjects: (1) what young children and adolescents know (in some sense) about language; and (2) what linguists know (in another sense) about language. Finally, I will look briefly at a third subject—namely, what these two kinds of "knowing" imply for the teaching of writing.

Most of the ideas that I am concerned with result from research in the field of psycholinguistics, and particularly in the area of language acquisition. Let us start with one of the most important of these ideas. I will ask a question, and you will believe that you know the answer. Then I will suggest (as gently as possible) that you are out-of-date.

Here is the question: What is the primary function of language?

If you are like most people, you will probably answer, "Communication." Approximately ten years ago, I would have answered the same way. But research during that time has caused me to change my answer. Now I believe the primary function of language, is, in a word, survival—and not simply survival in a social sense (that is, in the sense that, if you do not speak a standard dialect, you would have difficulty surviving in the business world or in some social situations). I mean survival as the biologists use the term. Consider an analogy with the opposing thumb. Humans have thumbs that can rotate so they "oppose" the fingers. This opposition permits us to grasp things—to hold tools—which has helped us survive by enabling us to develop such things as agriculture. In brief, the opposing thumb enhances the ability of the individual—and the species—to survive in the physical world.

Most researchers now believe that the same thing is true of language. Because we have language, we can name things, express relationships between things, develop concepts of cause and effect, and so on. And all this precedes the use of language in communication with others.

The case of Helen Keller is illustrative here. In the sense that I am now using the term *language*, Helen Keller had language long before she learned to communicate with Anne Sullivan. Miss Keller was, in fact, using her *language* to help her survive. In a loving and supportive way, Miss Sullivan was finally able to help Miss Keller relate this *language* to English. But this fact—the important fact—is that the survival language came first. This helps to explain why people are often apprehensive when we—well-meaning English teachers—try to change their language. (I will return to this subject, briefly.) Once we accept the idea of language as survival, we can more easily accept another, perhaps startling, idea: The acquisition of language is primarily a biological—rather than an intellectual—process. That is, most researchers now believe that the ability to acquire language is passed on through the DNA molecule. There is, in fact, evidence that children as young as 12 hours old have begun the process of acquiring language. Once we accept this idea, we can more readily understand several important conclusions that are derived from the idea:

- First, no language is inherently more difficult—more complex—than any other language.
- Second, any child can learn any language as a native language—given the proper circumstances.
- Third, the acquisition of language does not depend, in any way, on formal instruction.

> Contrary to what many people think, we do not teach language to children. Rather, they learn language biologically and, for the most part, effortlessly.

For the past 15 years, linguists have been trying to describe what it is that children (and adults) know when they know a language. The task is far from over. We have just begun to be able to describe what children "know." Still, what we have learned is, and I use the word with care, *awesome*.

I must proceed slowly here. Actually, I am trying to make two points at once, and both are important:

- First, researchers in language acquisition are convinced that a child entering school has already acquired (biologically) an enormous quantity of linguistic knowledge, particularly syntactic knowledge.
- Second, linguists are still very far away from describing, in any complete way, the precise nature of this knowledge.

As an example of syntactic knowledge, consider one use of *do* in English. There are certain questions, called tag questions, that sometimes require *do* and sometimes do not:

Statement	*Related tag question*
1. This is interesting.	This is interesting, isn't it?
2. You can swim.	You can swim, can't you?
3. The boy ate the hamburger.	The boy ate the hamburger, didn't he?

The rule for the use of *do, does,* and *did* in such questions is rather complex. It relates to whether the main verb in the statement is a form of *be,* and if it is not, to whether there is an auxiliary verb in the statement. My point, here, is this: Without ever receiving formal instruction in the use of *do,* most five-year-old children know when to use an appropriate form of *do* in a tag question. This is but one example out of thousands that I could cite of a child's syntactic knowledge—hence, my earlier use of the word *awesome*.

The second point is equally important. Although most linguists agree that the amount of knowledge possessed by a child is vast, they do not agree on a description of that knowledge. They do not even agree on such fundamental questions as the basic word order of an English sentence. Some say English is a subject-verb-object (SVO) language. Others say SOV. Still others say VSO.

Both these points relate to the teaching of writing. As a teacher once said to me after I had made the first point (and supported it with considerably more evidence than I have room for here), "Then our job is not to get language *into* the head of a child. Our job is to get it *out.*" (The teacher said this to me almost ten years ago. It sums up my point so succinctly that I have been quoting her frequently since then.)

In brief, I believe—and I want to state this as strongly as possible—that any teacher of writing must accept, as fact, the conclusion that school-age children possess an extraordinary wealth of linguistic knowledge. The question, then, is this: How do we get this knowledge "out" in the form of writing?

Much of this book is devoted to suggesting ways of getting the knowledge out, so I will not list these ways here. Rather, I will turn again to the second point.

We know less about the nature of linguistic knowledge—about grammar, if you will—than we do about the structure of the atom. This means, among many other things, that since we do not know the true nature of grammar, we do not know of any way to use grammar when we are teaching children to write. At this point, you may be asking yourself, "But what about parts of speech, what about diagramming, what about defining compound and complex sentences?"

The facts, as briefly as possible, are these. Traditional grammar—that is, of the sort most widely taught in schools today—is an extremely inaccurate description of English. Most people's knowledge of the system of English is as out-of-date as their knowledge of infinity. Moreover, research dating back more than 50 years, and frequently reconfirmed since then, indicates that a knowledge of traditional grammar bears no relation to writing ability. Even more significantly, recent research into brain hemispheres (right and left brains) indicates that the formal study of grammar (a left-brain activity) actually interferes with writing fluency (principally, right-brain activity).

In summary, we know that most children have linguistic knowledge adequate to the skill of writing, but we do not yet know of any way to use a formal description of this knowledge to help children develop their writing skills. Some things, however, are clear:

- The starting point in the teaching of writing must be the teacher's belief that children possess the requisite linguistic knowledge.
- Teachers need to use every possible means to give their students confidence in their linguistic knowledge. (Children who believe that they "don't know any grammar" are children who also believe they "can't write.")
- "Getting language out" is a process, and teachers of writing must have an intimate knowledge of this process. The best way of gaining this kind of knowledge is in actual writing.

I have discussed the first two of the preceding points already. The third point requires some comment. In every writing project that comes under the umbrella of the California Writing Project, the Project Fellows spend a considerable amount of time writing and discussing each other's writing. This writing, in fact, is the cornerstone of the project. Usually, at the beginning of a project, the majority of Fellows think the writing segment is only a minor part of the project. The major part, they think, will be the suggestions they receive on how to teach. But by the end of the project, the great majority of Fellows see the writing segment as the single most important part. They have experienced—in a very personal way—both the hardships and the rewards of writing. They know, personally, that writing is seldom fun, seldom easy, and they also know that it can be extremely satisfying.

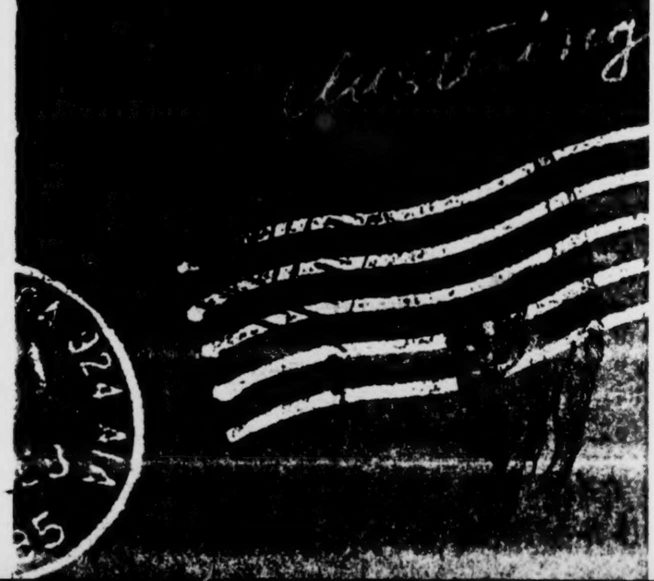
When they discussed writing before taking part in one of the California Writing Projects, the Project Fellows would talk about dangling modifiers, spelling, subject/verb agreement, and so on—all things that relate to the end product. After the project, they are much more inclined to talk about the process rather than the product of writing. Having shared their writing with other Fellows, they are vastly more sensitive to what a writer's real needs are. Having listened to criticism—some positive, some negative—of their own writing, they are better able to make helpful criticisms of a student's writing. It is through experiences like these that the Fellows come to appreciate—to experience—the fact that language is more than just communication. Language is associated with our sense of self, and ultimately, with survival.

In summary, in the out-of-date way of teaching writing we once subscribed to, we thought it necessary to put language into students' heads. Actually, the time we spent trying to do that was time we did not spend in real writing, in getting the language out. And it is to the task—and the joy of teaching real writing that my fellow contributors to this book now ask you to turn.

Owen Thomas died of lung cancer in March, 1990. Throughout his long and painful ordeal, the courage with which Owen faced his illness and the remarkable compassion which he demonstrated toward those he loved was truly inspirational. In December, 1989, to honor and celebrate Owen's many contributions to the UCI Writing Project, the teacher/consultants presented him with the just-completed manuscript of Thinking / Writing: Fostering Critical Thinking Through Writing, *which was later published by HarperCollins Publishers (1992). Three pages in, Owen found these words:*

> *This book is dedicated to Owen Thomas, who taught us that our job is not to put language into kids' heads but to help them express "the extraordinary 'wealth of linguistic knowledge' that each of them already possesses through writing."*

The Process



Teaching Writing as a Process

By Catherine D'Aoust
Coordinator, Instructional Services,
Saddleback Valley Unified School District;
and Codirector, UCI Writing Project

I was introduced to the concept of writing as a process several years ago at a composition conference at the University of California, Irvine. At that time I was teaching composition—not very successfully—and found that the idea of writing as a process afforded me a new perspective and had tremendous implications for classroom teaching. I immediately revised my curriculum and began to see my students improve as writers. What I have provided in this essay is a general description of the stages of the writing process and a discussion of the significance of this process for both the teacher and student. Subsequent sections of this book will offer practical ideas for teaching the various stages in the writing process at all levels of the curriculum.

Identifying the Stages of Writing as a Process

When writers and linguistic researchers describe writing as a process, they are attempting to describe the incredibly complex system of transforming thought into written communication. This description has had a significant impact on the composition teacher whose demand for a product has been replaced by a concern for the series of stages, both focused and unfocused, conscious as well as unconscious, which make up the writing process. It has meant using the stage-process model—prewriting, writing, sharing/responding, revising, editing, and evaluating—as a teaching tool to facilitate student writing. To do so, the composition teacher has had to reassess his or her goals and determine how to marry his or her process as a teacher with that of the student writer to improve the ultimate product.

Prewriting

The stage-process model begins by focusing on *prewriting*. Prewriting activities are designed to

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stimulate the flow of ideas before any structured writing begins. Writing arises out of a sense of having something to communicate. Any exercise which stimulates the writer's inner voice to seek verbalization is a prewriting activity. Brainstorming, clustering, debating, freewriting, and fantasizing are a few of the infinite possibilities. Prewriting activities generate ideas; they encourage a free flow of thoughts and help students discover both what they want to say and how to communicate it on paper. In other words, prewriting activities facilitate the planning for both the product and the process.

Writing

With a desire to communicate, students move to the next stage, *writing*. They allow their ideas to take shape by putting words to paper. However, the writers may lack any conscious awareness of what they specifically want to communicate. Writing then becomes a discovery on the conscious level. This movement of an idea to the conscious level allows for spontaneity and creativity and must not be impeded by concerns over correctness. Writing is simplified as the writers let go and disappear into the act of writing. As Sondra Perl says in her article, "Understanding Composing" (*College Composition and Communication*, December, 1980), "Writing is a process of coming into being."

Sharing/Responding

Having expressed themselves, the students move to the next stage called *sharing*. Writing can be a very lonely process; some of the difficulty in writing comes from the fact that it is one-way communication. Unlike speech, a writer's words often go untested. The writers use their own reactions to their words for primary feedback. Frequently, writers become so engrossed in what they are saying that it is impossible to distinguish between what they want to say and what they said. Given a chance to share with others, student writers gain a sense of the power of their words to have an impact on others. They gain a sense of audience, a significant trusted other, who will be influenced by the words of the writer. It is not unusual at this phase for writers to discover an incongruity between the purpose and the effect of their writing; writers may have intended to communicate a specific idea but, through the feedback from peers, learn that they did not do so. Then writers are at liberty to revise or possibly reassess their intention.

> *Writing, itself, is a process; the act of transforming thought into print involves a nonlinear sequence of creative acts or stages.*
>
> JAMES R. GRAY

Besides providing an audience and reactions to the writing, sharing generates enthusiasm about writing. Writers are inspired by effective student models to improve their own communication. Moreover, in *responding* to the writing being shared by others, writers gain a clearer sense of what distinguishes effective from ineffective writing. Once the students have discovered that they *can* write, the instructor can now teach revising and editing skills because the student writers will not only need them but will also request them.

Revising

Revising, then, is a *re-viewing* of the writing in light of the feedback. It is a reworking of the composition on both semantic and lexical levels; the writers are concerned not only with the words they have chosen to express their ideas but also with how these words work together. The student writers scratch out, mark over, add, rephrase, and reorder to make their words consistent with the intended meaning. It is a focused and conscious manipulation of words. Changes may be in words, phrases, sentences, paragraphs, or in the total composition.

Revision actually can occur at any time during the writing process because of the recursive nature of the act of composing. Sondra Perl further explains that writing is not simply a linear process but a "forward moving action that exists by virtue of a backward moving action." Writers put words to a page and immediately go back to see what they have created. Sondra Perl contends that writers not only go back to bits of discourse but

> *The result of structuring a composition course around the concept of writing as a process is that student writers come to understand that they have ideas to express.*
>
> CATHERINE D'AOUST

also return to their notion of the topic as well as to the "nonverbalized perceptions that surround the words." Student writers go backward to discover what they said and move forward to elaborate on it. The impulse to revise could occur at any time.

Editing

After addressing meaning, writers focus on correctness. This next stage in the writing process is *editing*, the imposing of correctness. Editing is a focused, deliberate, grammatical concern. The writers continue to rework their papers by adding and deleting and by correcting punctuation, spelling, and grammar. In keeping with the purpose of their work, the writers conform to the standards of written English.

During this altering and refining phase, the teacher will be called on to use his or her linguistic expertise. Appropriately, the composition teacher addresses grammar when it is relevant. Rather than using arbitrary grammar and punctuation exercises, the teacher is able to draw on the students' own writing to illustrate polishing techniques. Within that context, the writers use and increase their knowledge of the structure of the language to improve communication.

Evaluating

It is imperative during the focused, more conscious phases of the writing process that students have a clear sense of how their writing will be evaluated and by whom. The teacher and students must agree regarding the standards that will be used for evaluating writing. *Evaluation*, the next stage in the writing process, is simply the final feedback for the student writers and usually comes in the form of a grade. Often, there is a discrepancy between the criteria used by the teacher and the students for evaluation. If a letter grade is a surprise, the writing process is flawed. This generally happens when a teacher sets the standards for evaluation, often with an undue emphasis on correctness, either without adequately communicating the standards to the class or with few or no suggestions from the students.

Dialogue between the teacher and the student writers concerning evaluation also allows the teacher more options. Optimally, the students should be able to assess their own papers. However, if the teacher assesses the writing, the students should be able to offer suggestions. One effective technique for giving students this opportunity is to have the writers attach statements to their papers in which they give the criteria they would like used in assessing their work. The writers and teacher then have complementary roles in the writing process.

Overlapping of the Stages

As the teacher facilitates the students' writing process, it becomes apparent that the writing stages overlap and sometimes compete for the students' attention. Student writers do not simply move linearly from procedure to procedure. Their own recursive inner processes dictate the sequence. Rarely do students inhibit themselves while writing from spontaneously editing, revising, and sharing. The stages are ongoing, and with the guidance of the instructor, student writers are able to direct their attention while still acknowledging the demands of their inner processes. (See Figure 1 for an illustration of this conceptual model.)

The result of structuring a composition course around the concept of writing as a process is that student writers come to understand that they have ideas to express, that they can find words to communicate those ideas, that others are interested in what they have to say, and finally that they have or can acquire the expertise to clarify that communication. The teacher facilitates all this and takes satisfaction in watching the writing of students improve. To help students discover their individual writing processes, the teacher may have to restructure the classroom and constantly reevaluate his or her role as a writing teacher. The result of this is that the teacher will probably feel better about being a teacher/facilitator of writing primarily because his or her students are becoming much better writers.

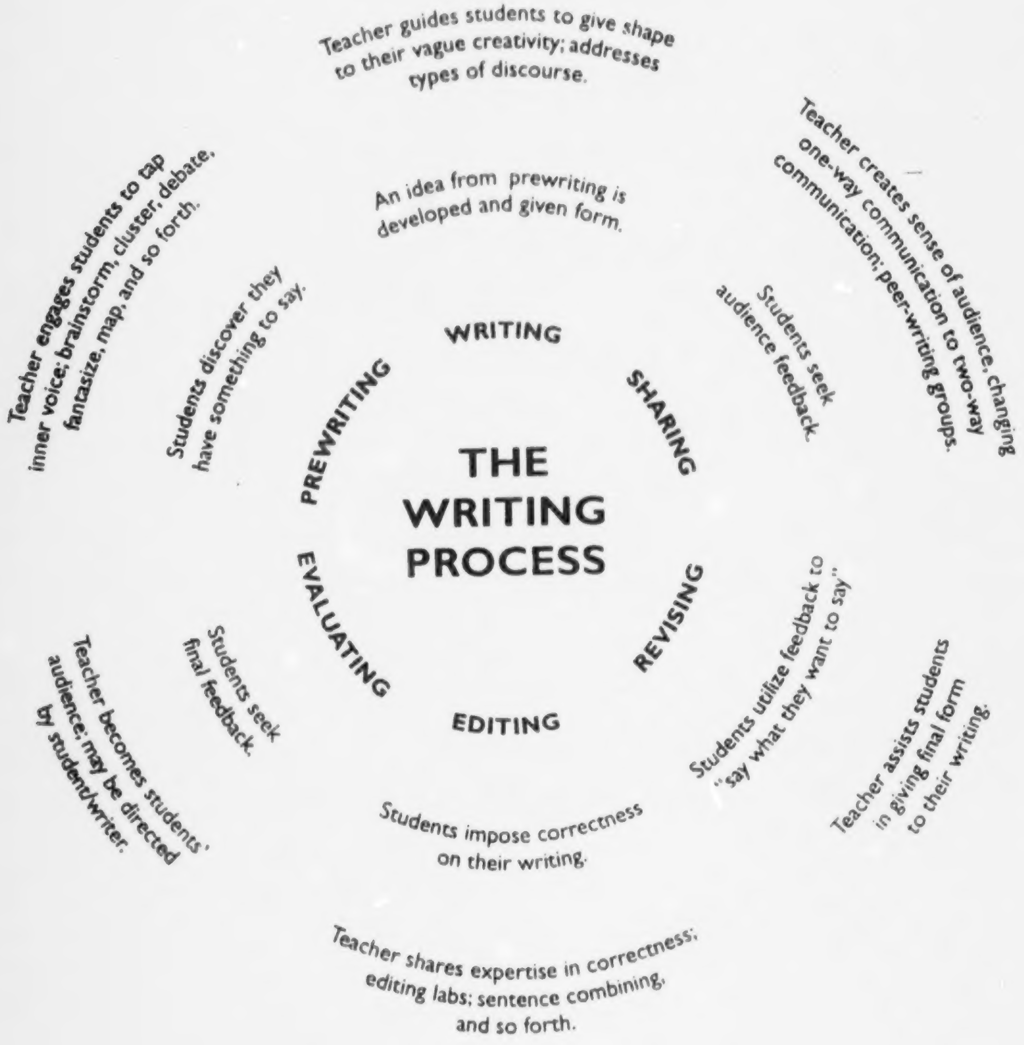

Teacher guides students to give shape to their vague creativity; addresses types of discourse.
An idea from prewriting is developed and given form.
WRITING
Teacher creates sense of audience, changing one-way communication to two-way communication; peer-writing groups.
Students seek audience feedback.
SHARING
THE WRITING PROCESS
REVISING
Students utilize feedback to "say what they want to say."
Teacher assists students in giving final form to their writing.
EDITING
Students impose correctness on their writing.
Teacher shares expertise in correctness; editing labs; sentence combining, and so forth.
EVALUATING
Students seek final feedback.
Teacher becomes students' audience; may be directed by student/writer.
PREWRITING
Students discover they have something to say.
Teacher engages students to tap inner voice; brainstorm, cluster, debate, fantasize, map, and so forth.

Fig. 1. The Writing Process

Practical Ideas for Teaching Writing as a Process

How Do You *Really* Write?

By Susan Starbuck
English Teacher, Jordan High School,
Long Beach Unified School District;
and Teacher/Consultant, UCI Writing Project

***Note:* The following is a letter I wrote to a colleague at my high school after I attended the 1981 UCI Writing Project's summer institute.**

Dear Sheila:

How do you *really* write? I don't mean how do you teach how to write, but how do you actually do it? If this question were your essay assignment, how would you approach it? Would you write an outline? Or would something else happen first? At what point would you develop a thesis? Do you have it developed before the first draft? When do you revise the paper: as you go or after you finish a draft completely? When do you correct the grammar and diction? Even more important, whom do you write for? Who is your audience? What would you say to me that you wouldn't say to another teacher?

The UCI Writing Project came through for me after all, so I've just spent five weeks thinking about these issues. But I haven't been observing the end product of a writing assignment and analyzing what the students can and cannot do. Instead, I have been writing again—getting in touch with the whole scope of writing, not just the expository essays I have been doing for graduate school. In so doing I have "acquired" (a key word in the Writing Project), a new view of teaching writing. I understand what we are doing well and why, and I can suggest how we can do it better.

I have been teaching writing in these steps: brainstorm, formulate a thesis, outline, write, rewrite. I present this as a linear process. I tell students that they may abandon their outline in the process of writing or that the rewrite might look very different from the original draft; but I don't think many of them hear me, and now I think I wasn't sure what I was saying.

The process I just described is very left-brain. Indeed, I do many left-brain functions as I work on a paper. But the truth is I do not get my original ideas from the left brain, as I realized when I listened to Gabriele Rico, an English and Creative Arts Professor from California State University, San Jose. I definitely use my right-brain integration periodically to sense the whole, constantly moving back and forth in some kind of recursive process between brain functions to shape and order my material.

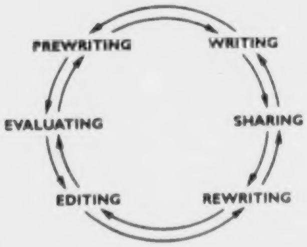
Personally, I start the writing process with brainstorming to sense the whole pattern, but my experience of brainstorming is not linear just because I jot words in lines on a page. By the time I do an outline, however, my thinking is very linear and left-brain. Yet, long ago, I learned to transcend outlines, to let things happen in some sort of natural way as I wrote, and to ignore or change the outline as I wrote. Furthermore, I figured out that rewriting meant more than changing the words and correcting the grammar; it meant deleting, adding, rearranging, and substituting as much as a page of what I had written or scrapping the entire beginning. Consequently, I am writing this letter in stages that hardly resemble what I teach.

I still haven't been able to form an outline of what I want to say to you because that outline is emerging during the self-discovery of writing. But I know from experience that I will be able to outline this letter when I finish because I have a firmly "acquired" sense of the form of written language.

This summer I learned a more accurate process model to teach to students than I had been using.

> *Rewriting meant deleting, adding, rearranging, and substituting as much as a page of what I had written or scrapping the entire beginning.*
>
> SUSAN STARBUCK

This model more closely parallels my actual writing process and helps students help each other to "acquire" written language skills through meaningful, social interaction. The model is circular rather than linear and is often recursive in nature. I know through observations of the writing group I participated in that recursiveness, going back to move forward, will begin to happen as a by-product of interaction. The new model looks like this:



And it's all leading to the development of three types of composing skills: fluency, form, and correctness.

I can't wait to get back to the classroom and implement what I've learned. I know that my new perspective on the writing process will definitely influence my teaching. I'm anxious to see how this will affect my students. I'll keep you posted on how things go. In the meantime, why not discover how you really write by writing me back!

Love,

Susan

Establishing a Community of Writers

By Martha Johnson

Codirector, Cooperative Writing Program
San Diego State University; and Teacher/Consultant, San Diego Area Writing Project

Several years ago at the beginning of the semester, I asked students to interview each other, hoping this interaction would help to establish a relaxed atmosphere for writing. It did. It immediately got them talking and writing, and much to my delight, introduced them to the writing process as well. When I first gave the assignment, students interviewed a classmate and then drafted, revised, and read their introductions to each other. Now they also prepare their introductions for a classroom publication—"A Community of Writers." Doing so encourages them to spend more time revising and editing, and it provides me with valuable information about my students I would never have otherwise. Here is how it works.

Day ONE Students are asked to interview someone sitting near them. Each student is given five minutes to ask questions and jot down notes about the other student's background and interests. After they have each shared information about themselves, they spend about 15 minutes drafting an introduction from their notes. They then read their drafts to their partners for reactions and suggestions so that misconceptions can be corrected and information added or deleted. Students listen carefully to what has been written and respond honestly with helpful advice because they want what will be printed about them to be accurate.

If a partner is needed, I interview a student; and near the end of the hour, I talk a bit about how I came up with ideas for introductions I have written in the past, pointing out how each presented different problems. Then I read a few introductions written by students from previous semesters. As we explore the reasons why one or two of the introductions are especially good, we are reminded that good writing is full of well-chosen details and has a controlling idea that ties it all together.

Before the students leave, I provide them with a model of the required format—one that will save both time and paper when the writing is printed. The name of the student interviewed, typed in capitals (e.g., INTRODUCING ANN BROWN), should be two spaces above the text, and the name of the writer, one space below the text. Introductions should be single-spaced and should be no less than one-third nor more than two-thirds of a page. I created a few models the first time I gave the assignment; now extra copies of publications provide a wealth of examples.

Day TWO Students exchange introductions with their partners, and if no changes are needed in the text or format, they turn them in. The rest of the hour is theirs to revise their introductions or to work on other assignments. Most students appreciate this additional time to help each other or to have me look at their work before they make their final revisions.

Day THREE Revisions are due. After I collect them, I ask students to take a few minutes to write about the process they went through to create the introduction. Then we all share our experiences, and I introduce them to a few more strategies for generating, shaping, developing, and refining a piece of writing.

A word is dead
When it is said,
Some say.
I say it just
Begins to live
That day.

EMILY DICKINSON

When I do the layout, I try to correct any errors that might cause embarrassment, even doing a bit of retyping if necessary. And I try to arrange the writing so that partners' introductions are together. Then it is off to duplicating. When the copies arrive, everyone introduces his or her partner. After we have enjoyed hearing about each other, I review the process—the collecting of information, organizing, drafting, sharing, revising, and editing—that leads to the students' successful completion of their published writing.

I have used this assignment with high school students, undergraduates, and teachers in seminars, and I have always been pleased by what it accomplishes. It gets students talking, laughing, and sharing their writing. It introduces them to each other and to the writing process. It provides me with a great deal of useful information and helps to establish a climate of trust—a community of writers.

Introducing Teachers to the Concept of Writing as a Process

By Sue Rader Willett
English Teacher, Capistrano Valley High School,
Capistrano Unified School District;
and Teacher/Consultant, UCI Writing Project

Practice what you preach! Those few simple words have to be one of the most irritating, guilt-inducing, challenging, hackneyed, and—begrudgingly, I admit—wisest adages I know. They have certainly taunted and guided me through many personal dilemmas, classroom lessons, and, oddly enough, in-service workshops for colleagues, administrators, and lay people.

In fact, I consciously work to practice what we, the teacher/consultants from the UCI Writing Project, enthusiastically preach and teach. Much of our approach to the teaching of writing boils down to five tenets:

1. Teachers of writing should, themselves, write so that they are in touch with their own writing abilities.
2. Students should experience audiences other than the teacher as assessor. Other audiences include self, peer, and teacher as a partner in learning.
3. Peer response groups can lessen the load of correcting papers and yet ensure that the students get ample writing experiences and constant feedback.
4. Students should be involved in the evaluation process.
5. Teachers should stress the written product less and emphasize writing as a process more.

Those basic statements of philosophy can easily be translated into an in-service training design.

Planning an in-service training program to introduce the concept of writing as a process is very much like planning any lesson, meeting, or composition. One begins by forming a clear idea of the audience to be addressed and the message to be communicated. Once these two items have been defined, one has to create a procedural plan for presenting the writing process.

I believe that it is imperative to "hook" your audience within the first few seconds of your in-service training workshop, and the easiest and most effective way to do that is to immediately involve them on a very personal level. What is a better way of doing that than writing?

"The Popcorn Reminiscence," which I have used as an opening for in-service training, is a simple exercise in sensory/descriptive and narrative writing. (A little exposition might work itself in here and there, too.) Save the theory and research for later. Begin with an experience, such as the one for "The Popcorn Reminiscence" outlined below:

The Popcorn Reminiscence

1. Planning the experience (to be completed before the in-service training begins):
    a. Assemble the popcorn popper, popcorn, butter, salt, oil (preferable for olfactory impact), serving utensils, and napkins.
    b. Pop or purchase enough prepared popcorn to serve the participants.
    c. Set up your equipment and utensils near a working electrical outlet.
2. Prewriting activity
    a. While the popcorn is popping and the aroma is permeating the entire room, ask the participants to begin clustering the word *popcorn*. Direct them to include any experiences they connect with popcorn.
    b. Serve the popcorn while they cluster. Taste will spark more ideas.
    c. You may wish to use an overhead projector or chalkboard to record (cluster) their words, as shown in Figure 2.
3. Writing activity
    a. Inform the students that they should begin writing when they feel ready and believe they have clustered enough. A prompt might be:

       Write a short personal reminiscence that involves popcorn.
    b. Explain that what they write will be read and evaluated by others for content and any other attributes you wish to include.
    c. Write with them if possible. Many will be nervous, and your openness will help.
4. Postwriting activity
    a. After a few minutes of writing, ask them to finish up and quickly reread for minor editing. Stress that papers are to be read as first and very rough drafts.
    b. Ask each participant to record the last four digits of his or her telephone number at the top of the page and to title the piece.
    c. Conduct a "read-around" for evaluation. (See the section on read-around groups, which appears later in the book, for a description of this technique.) Direct the readers to jot down the numbers of the papers they most enjoyed.
    d. After all the papers have been read, ask the participants to share the numbers of the papers they enjoyed. Record the numbers on a chart or chalkboard, and positively reinforce those whose numbers appeared.

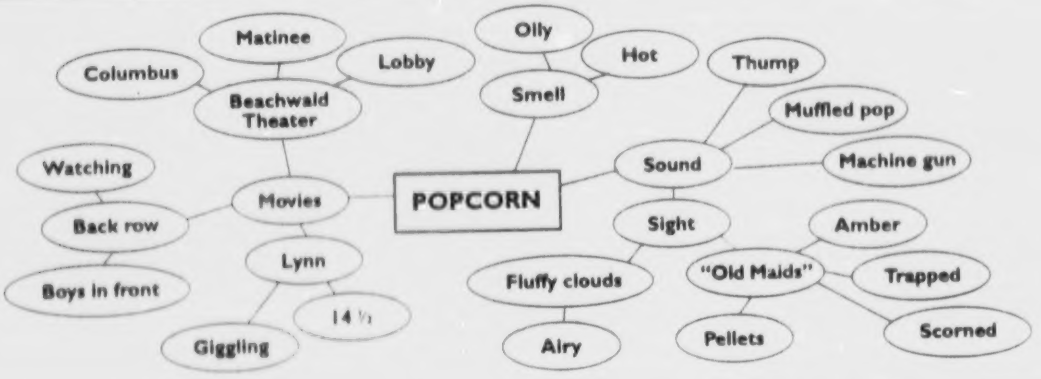


Fig. 2. The Clustering of *Popcorn*

5. Establishing closure and directing the participants to take a short break
    a. During the break encourage the participants to discuss the experience they shared.
    b. You may wish to join in informally or take this time to collect your thoughts or clean up the popcorn area.

After the members of your audience have written and have immersed themselves in the very activity we so quickly demand of our students, they will be open to a fresh view of the complexity of the writing process with all its cognitive and affective variables. Marlene Scardamalia reminds us how complex the task of written composition is:

> "The proposition that it is theoretically impossible to learn to write has the ring of truth," says Peter Elbow [in *Writing Without Teachers*, 1973, page 135]. Too many interdependent skills are involved, and all seem to be prerequisite to one another. To pay conscious attention to handwriting, spelling, punctuation, word choice, syntax, textual connections, purpose, organization, clarity, rhythm, euphony, and reader characteristics would seemingly overload the information processing capacity of the best intellects.[1]

Every practicing writer intuitively knows that. We must reinforce that knowledge and use it wisely. Your audience knows that writing, good writing, is extremely difficult to achieve. Yet, they must be made aware that it can be done in a much less than chaotic, hit-or-miss fashion that many teachers practice—for want of better training and information.

Therefore, it is helpful to explain the writing process at this point in your presentation. It may include these stages:

1. Prewriting: Brainstorming, collecting material, and giving data from which an assignment is written (clustering, lecture, experience, discussion, and so forth).
2. Precomposing: The assignment is given, and a writing plan is formulated (mapping, outlining, and so forth).

> *Writing is, indeed, one of the most complex intellectual and even emotional processes a person engages in.*
>
> SUE RADER WILLETT

3. Writing: Ideas from prewriting and precomposing are developed and given form in verse or prose.
4. Sharing: Writing is shared with others (partner or group) for positive feedback or suggestions for revision.
5. Rewriting: Based on the feedback received in the sharing step, additions and deletions are made on paper.
6. Evaluation: The writing is scored on the basis of a rubric, a list of desirable qualities a paper is measured against (formal or informal).
7. Rewriting and reevaluation: This is an optional step that may be used as many times as necessary.

Remind your audience that writing is a recursive process and that even though we may logically delineate its various stages, they do not occur in a nice, neat, orderly fashion. In fact, they often happen all at once or out of sequence. Writing is, indeed, one of the most complex intellectual and even emotional processes a person engages in, and it draws from the left and right hemispheres of the brain. While the process model outlined above is certainly not a perfect description of the writing activity, it does serve as a very effective teaching design, one that is readily understood by children and adults. (For more information on the process, see the Department of Education's *Handbook for Planning an Effective Writing Program*.)

After discussing the writing process generally and emphasizing the complexity of thought and the stages of the process, you might want to establish that teachers of writing can systematically work to improve writing based on the three goals of fluency, form, and correctness, as defined below:

- Fluency: Authentic voice, facility with words and phrasing, ability to be spontaneous, a "mature" or appropriate vocabulary, a sense of pacing

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[1] Marlene Scardamalia, "How Children Cope with the Cognitive Demands of Writing," in *Writing: Process, Development and Communication*, Vol. 2 of *Writing: The Nature, Development, and Teaching of Written Communication*. Edited by Carl H. Frederiksen and Joseph F. Dominic. Hillsdale, N. J.: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Publishers, 1981, p. 81. Used by permission of the publisher.

- Form: Logical development, adequate transition, use of supporting details, variation of sentence structure
- Correctness: Using the conventions of written English (spelling, punctuation, grammar) and departing from them only for a valid reason

We must work to refine and practice the goals of fluency, form, and correctness in our lessons and in our personal writing. I believe it would be safe to assume that these are the same goals even the most respected and prolific writers seek to perfect.

As much as we would like to believe that writing can be perfected, I am not certain that it can be. Certainly, the "greats" come close. Blasphemous as it may sound, consider that William Shakespeare, Alexander Pope, Samuel Johnson, Thomas Hardy, Raymond Chandler, D. H. Lawrence, Ernest Hemingway, Carl Sandburg, Henry David Thoreau, and all the other great writers still needed to refine certain aspects of these goals. And although our students and we writers certainly produce works that are far from perfect, we face the same task and the same problems as they did—step by step by step. *Great* writing may be a long way off, but *good* writing could be right around the corner. Just remember, Johnny can and does write with the proper guidance. Your in-service training can make a difference to Johnny's teacher if you plan it with a philosophy in mind, involve your audience as writers, present a systematic approach to teaching, and, of course, *practice what you preach.*

The Demonstration Lesson

By Paulette Morgan

English Teacher, El Monte High School,
El Monte Union High School District;
and Teacher/Consultant, UCI Writing Project

The day before the principal arrives for evaluation is not the best time to begin preparing a demonstration lesson. A few phrases scribbled in a planning book are not adequate either. I used to think I could carry every detail of the lesson in my brain, ready to be tapped at a moment's notice, but now I know a better way. The clearest, most specific understanding of the lessons I teach are those spelled out specifically in a format that includes all the details of what is to be taught. Not only do the students understand more clearly what is expected of them, but I also have a firmer grasp of my subject. I also have lessons to trade, to reuse, and to spark new lessons.

Two lessons follow: The first is a general guide for developing a writing lesson, and the second is a specific lesson generated from this guide.

Lesson objective: The teacher will write a lesson that fosters both thinking and writing skills.

1. Prewriting
   a. Construct activities and experiences that lead students to value the writing process and to have confidence in themselves as writers.
   b. Generate ideas that may not be specific to the prompt but that foster higher levels of critical thinking.
   c. Provide for the visual, auditory, kinesthetic, or experiential needs of the students and the thinking and writing skills they are being called on to use.
2. Prompt
   a. Write specific directions for the task.
   b. Tell what is required in terms of fluency, form, and correctness.
   c. Explain what is expected in the content of the final piece of writing.
   d. Remember: The more specific the prompt and the clearer the criteria for evaluation, the better able the student will be to respond appropriately.
   e. Reveal to students the criteria for evaluation. There are to be no secrets or mysteries about how the writing will be judged.
3. Precomposing
   a. Structure activities and experiences to help students generate ideas specific to the prompt.
   b. Include many and various activities.
   c. Aid students in developing a writing plan.
   d. Provide models of what is expected of them.
4. Writing
   a. Allow them time to think.
   b. Stress fluency.
   c. Specify guidelines in precomposing and again in writing to assist students in composing a first draft.
   d. Remove as many constraints and stress factors as possible by providing adequate input in prewriting and precomposing.

5. Sharing
   a. Plan how the students will read and comment on one another's writing.
   b. Provide a list of guide questions and comments to direct students in their responses.
   c. Decide what the role of the teacher will be in the sharing process.
6. Revising
   a. Explain how responses can be used to reassess the quality of the student's own work.
   b. Provide models.
   c. Allow them time to rewrite.
7. Editing

   Specify and reinforce the requirements of the correctness from the prompt.
8. Evaluating
   a. Decide on the method to be used to judge the writing.
   b. Specify and reinforce the requirements of the prompt.
   c. Judge and evaluate.
9. Postwriting

   Plan what will be done with the writing next (displayed, used as learning tool, shared with another audience).

The following lesson, "I Am a Scallop," is based on the writing-as-process plan detailed above. Use it as a model for developing lessons of your own.

I Am a Scallop

LESSON

In this lesson, you will be asked to assume the persona of a creature living in a seashell and to write a first-person narrative. You will need to imagine, illustrate, sequence, and apply research material in order to tell a story.

PREWRITING

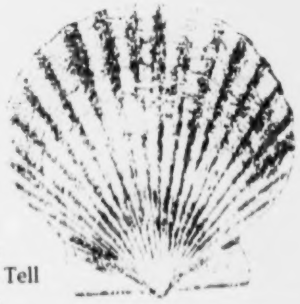
Visit a tide pool or marine museum. Experience the land, sea, air, and the total environment with classmates and instructor. Ask questions of, and discuss experience with, others.

Examine a variety of seashells. Compare size, color, structure, texture, and appearance.

List the characteristics of one shell you have chosen that distinguishes it from the other shells. Use all five senses.

Draw a picture of the shell you have chosen. Color it as accurately as your skills permit.

PROMPT



Imagine you are a creature living in a seashell. Write a story about a day in your life. Describe yourself and your shell in vivid, colorful language. Describe the area in which you live. Tell about and describe the other creatures and plants that live there. Explain how you get food and what you eat. Illustrate a typical predator and what might happen to you if you became the victim. Demonstrate how you would protect yourself. Make the story informative as well as dramatic, especially when you are protecting yourself.

Criteria for judging the writing will be posted on the chalkboard for the period of time you are writing.

PRECOMPOSING

Look up, in an encyclopedia, information about the creature you will be. Read the entry and list specific details about biologic and environmental factors you would be a part of.

Make a list of answers to the following questions for use during your writing:

1. What does your environment look like? What other plants and animals live there?
2. In what areas of the ocean would you live? How far under the surface would you live?
3. What do you eat? How do you get your food? How do you travel around?
4. What do you look like? What size are you? Are you a male or a female? How do you meet others like yourself? How long do you live?
5. What creatures would be likely to eat you? How does such a predator get you out of the shell? How do you protect yourself?

Share lists in response groups. Ask response partners for ideas and information you might add to your list.

WRITING

Write a rough draft of the story following the guidelines of the prompt. Do not be concerned with form or correctness.

SHARING

Use this checklist to respond to writing in your response groups:

> *The clearest lessons are spelled out specifically in a format that includes all the details of what is to be taught.*
>
> PAULETTE MORGAN

1. Is there vivid detail about the creature and its shell? Put a star at the beginning of each sentence that shows detail.
2. Does the writer describe the environment so you can see a picture of it in your mind? Underline sentences that make you picture the scene.
3. On the basis of what was written, do you fully understand what it is like being this creature? If so, write a positive comment on the paper. If not, write a suggestion about how the writer could make the story more understandable or better.
4. Did the description of the predator and what it might do make you want to avoid it? If so, write "UCK!" at the beginning of the story.
5. Is the story organized so that it reads smoothly and does not jump from one item to another? Does the story have closure? If so, write "SMOOTHIE" at the top. If not, write suggestions that might improve the organization or closure.

REVISING

Write a second draft of the story and incorporate the suggestions and comments made by response partners. Rework and revise the parts that need improvement.

EDITING

Each student must read two other stories for correctness. Your story must be read by two others for correctness. Pay particular attention to spelling, punctuation, sentence structure, and organization.

Write a final copy, double spaced, in your best handwriting (or typed). Add a title and submit for evaluation.

EVALUATION

Use the following guide for judging the stories. (This can be done by the teacher, students, or a combination of both.)

5 - Rich in detail and description that make the readers picture the creature, the shell, its life, and the predator. Story is told in first person with few or minor errors in correctness.

3 - Adequate story, few or bland descriptions, but significant problems with correctness and structure. Consistent point of view in story.

1 - Sketchy details, poor organization, serious problems with structure and correctness. Shifts in point of view.

Talking Students Through the Thinking-Writing Process

By Jerry Judd

English Teacher, Irvine High School,
Irvine Unified School District;
and Teacher/Consultant, UCI Writing Project

I have always been a believer in writing with my students, becoming a partner in learning, and engaging in a true dialogue with them about the writing and learning that are occurring in my classroom. To begin this process, I direct students through prewriting activities to help them generate ideas, give them the prompt to guide them, and provide precomposing activities to aid them in translating their thoughts into print. Then the writing begins. At this point I used to sit at my desk and observe some students writing successfully; some sitting puzzled, not exactly sure what to do next; and others staring at the ceiling, blank page, or scrawling hand of the person next to them.

Since I have been exposed to the concept of metacognition, I have become aware of how important it is to model my own thinking and writing process as my students are engaged in the act of composing. *Metacognition*, in its simplest sense, can be defined as thinking about thinking. It is a conscious monitoring of one's own thinking process. It could be the ability to realize that you do not understand something another person just said. It could be paraphrasing aloud what someone has just told you to determine whether he or she will agree that that is, in fact, exactly what was meant. It could be the realization that someone does not know enough about a particular subject to write effectively about it and needs to gather more information before beginning to write. I have found that one of the most valuable uses of metacognition is as a tool for self-questioning. Rarely, if ever, have students had the opportunity to listen to how a writer thinks during the writing process. My students needed to hear how a writer progressed through the same writing assignments that they were doing.

So, now, when my students are ready to begin writing a draft, I talk them through my own thinking-writing process. I begin by thinking aloud. Those students who are working well are instructed to continue writing and to ignore me. They pause only momentarily as my voice begins; then they go back to their work. Those who are having trouble starting to write focus their attention on me and what I am saying. I admit that at first they look at me and think I am somewhat crazy talking to myself, rambling, talking off the top of my head, and jotting down ideas on the overhead projector. But they get used to this activity rather quickly. There is value in having students see *raw* words scrawled on the page, the first draft being illuminated by the light of the overhead projector.

Here is a partial list of questions to ask yourself when starting this self-talk, self-questioning, metacognitive technique:

What do I want to write about?
What do I know about this subject?
What essential knowledge do I lack about this subject?
What do I want to say about this subject?
How will I organize my piece?
Who is my audience?
What effect do I want to have on my audience?
How do I get from the beginning of this piece to the end?

The only ground rule during this process is that no one can interrupt me or ask questions. I admit, at first, this is a frightening thing to put myself through. Some teachers may want to forgo my ground rule and elicit comments and suggestions from the class if they get stuck. It is valuable, though, for teachers to become *stuck* in their thinking. Perhaps this is the best pedagogical tool of all. For it is here that students are able to see the difficulty of the writing process, even for the teacher of writing. "Let's see how he gets himself out of this one," I can almost hear a student think as he leans back in his chair against the back wall.

I go through this self-questioning/thinking-aloud process while the students listen, get ideas, and then begin their own drafts. I also do a similar process during the revision and editing stages of the writing process. I do this with my writing as an example and also with students' drafts. Sometimes, students will take my place and sit in the "writer's chair" at the overhead projector and think and write before their classmates.

I have found this technique invaluable in demonstrating to inexperienced writers how a writer thinks through the writing process. This technique brings students in the class in touch with their own problem-solving process and allows them to assess and see what *thinking* must occur before they can write.

> *One of the most valuable uses of metacognition is as a tool for self-questioning.*
>
> **JERRY JUDD**

For most of the students, they are seeing a new persona they have not encountered in a teacher before. After observing me in this process, my students look at me differently—as a writer, as someone who shares the same frustrations and triumphs as they do. Students often comment that other teachers have told them *what* to write, but I am the first one who has ever shown them *how* to write.

Prewriting

Clustering: A Prewriting Process

By Gabriele Lusser Rico
Associate Professor, English and Creative Arts,
California State University, San Jose

Even after several years of continued experiments with clustering in my classrooms, I remain awed at its simple power, excited by its many applications, surprised at the changes it has wrought in my overall approach to teaching.

The clustering process grew out of my fascination with the findings from brain research of the past 20 years, and it represents a way to involve the talents of the mute right brain in the complex symbolic activity that we call writing. The story of specialized capacities of the two hemispheres of the brain has been told again and again. In this brief space it is enough to say that the left brain has primarily logical, linear, and syntactic capabilities while the right brain has holistic, image-making, and synthetic capabilities.

Clustering is based on the premise that any effective writing effort moves from a whole—no matter how vague or tenuous—to the parts, then back to a more clearly delineated whole. What is of overriding importance for writing is that the talents of both hemispheres of the brain be brought into play in the process. Clustering focuses on that initial whole by fashioning a trial web of knowings from the clusterer's mental storehouse.

What Is It?

Exactly what is clustering? I can define clustering as a nonlinear brainstorming process that generates ideas, images, and feelings around a stimulus word until a pattern becomes discernible. But the student evaluation of clustering, as shown in Figure 1, presents a clearer, more graphic definition. As this student indicates, clustering makes silent, invisible mental processes visible and manipulable; hence, teachable and usable. In short, clustering is a powerful mental tool.

How Does It Work?

How does clustering work? It works, very likely, by blocking the critical censorship of the analytic left

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> *Clustering engenders and encourages expressive behavior at all levels of proficiency.*
>
> GABRIELE LUSSER RICO

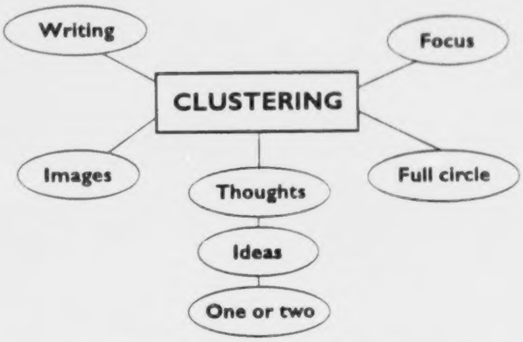
brain and by allowing the synthesizing right brain to make flash-like nonlinear connections. A cluster is an expanding universe, and each word is a potential galaxy; each galaxy, in turn, may throw out its own universes. As students cluster around a stimulus word, the encircled words rapidly radiate outward until a sudden shift takes place, a sort of Aha! that signals a sudden awareness of that tentative whole which allows students to begin writing.

What Are Appropriate Instructions?

What instructions should you give to begin this prewriting process? I have found the following both appropriate and effective:

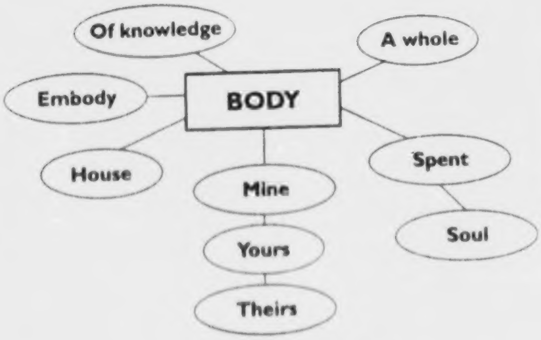
1. Tell students that they are going to learn to use a tool that will enable them to write more easily and more powerfully—a tool similar to brainstorming.
2. Encircle a word on the board—for example, *energy*—and ask students, "What do you think of when you see that word?" Encourage all responses. Cluster these responses, radiating outward. When the students have finished giving their responses, say, "See how many ideas there are floating around in your head? Now, if you cluster all by yourself, you will have a set of connections as unique to your own mind as your thumbprint is to your thumb."
3. Now ask students to cluster a second word for themselves. Before they begin, tell them that the clustering process should take no more than one to two minutes and that the paragraph they will write should take about eight minutes. Ask them to keep clustering until the Aha! shift, signaling that their mind is holding something they can shape into a whole. In writing, the only constraint is that they "come full circle"; i.e., that they do not leave the writing unfinished. Some excellent words are *afraid* or *try* or *help*.
4. After they finish writing, ask students to give a title to what they have written that is suggestive of the whole.

Figure 2 is a cluster and paragraph by a college freshman written on the first day I introduced clustering to the class. Note the quality of wholeness—the completeness of the piece. Note the rather sophisticated stylistic devices, such as repetition and parallel construction, which increasingly become a part of student writing as students continue to cluster. Note also that this ten-minute



I believe tha[illegible]stering is a natural process we do unconsciously in our mind. It is more helpful to do it on paper, though. Our mind clusters many ideas and thoughts, but it is unable to sort and sift the ideas into a reasonable order around one main focus. When we cluster on paper, we can visually look at our ideas and choose which ones we want to use. The thoughts in our mind are all piled together, and we see only one or two at a time. On paper, through clustering, we can see all our thoughts at once as a whole.

Fig. 1. An Anonymous Student Evaluation of *Clustering*



I sometimes wish for a different one—this body that is me. I am inside this scrawny hide that other people react to instead of to the real me. They look at me real funny-like sometimes; maybe they wonder what's inside. So I talk, and they hear what is inside by what I say; perhaps they see what is inside by how I move; or maybe they guess what is inside by what I do. Now, you please talk to me, so I can know something about the you inside your body.

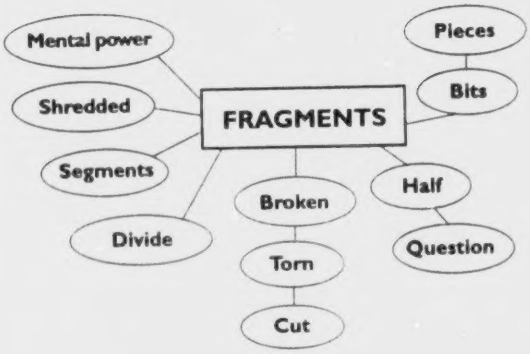
Fig. 2. Paragraph Developed from Clustering *Body*

effort, although complete in itself, has the potential of being developed into a highly focused, longer piece of writing. The organic center is already there.

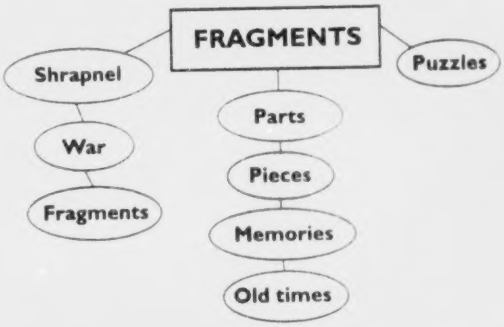
What Is the Effect of Clustering?

The writer whose cluster and paragraph are reproduced in Figure 2 discovered—even after the first time—that clustering was easy and unthreatening. Since a cluster draws on primary impressions—yet simultaneously on a sense of the overall design—clustering actually generates structure, shaping one thought into a starburst of other thoughts, each somehow related to the whole. That is why clustering so often results in writing that is naturally marked by increased coherence, increased fluency, increased concrete support, and an increased sense of how to expand ideas.

Perhaps the most significant outcome of clustering is its idiosyncratic nature. A stimulus word filtered through the singular experiential grid of each individual clusterer produces a unique constellation. The stimulus (cluster word) *fragments*, for example, produced three widely divergent responses, as shown in Figure 3.



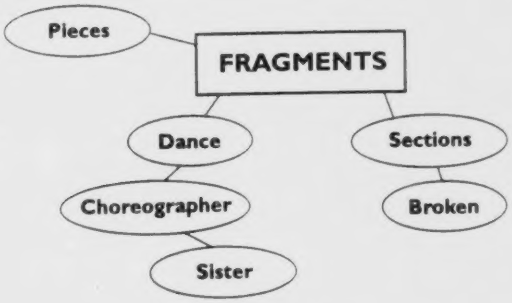
When I think of the word, fragment, *it makes me try to visualize the inside of my head. It just seems as though my mind is always divided, never really coming to a whole. One half wants to do something that the other half doesn't want to do. One seems to be saying, "Come on, let's not go to class; you can do your paper later," while the other side of my mind answers back, "but I have to because I'll be missing out on my learning." These two halves go on and on like that, just bruising the inside of my mind, and, if they continue, they'll probably shred my mind all to pieces.*



Sometimes, when I'm sitting back, relaxed and reminiscing over old times in my head, small fragments of memories will flash through my mind. They never stay long enough to be recognized by my brain as a complete thought. They seem to stay just long enough to bring back the emotion of the moment, and I will find myself smiling or frowning or wanting to cry. I wish I could grab hold of these pieces of my memory—especially the happy ones—as they fly by the recall part of my brain, but I am happy at least for the glimpses I get.

(Continued on next page)

Fig. 3. Three Responses to Clustering the Word *Fragments*



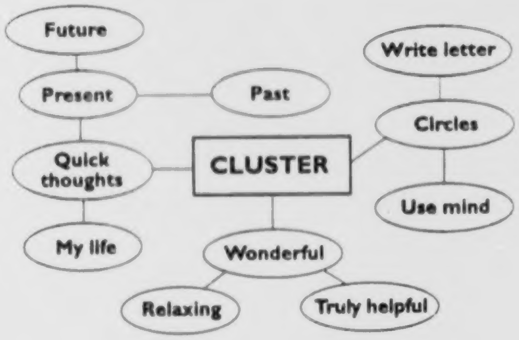
My sister choreographed a dance called "Fragments" last year for the SJSU Arts Department. The reason she named her dance "Fragments" was that the whole dance was made up of bits and pieces of dances. There were about five different movements making up the whole dance. It was as if the entire dance were broken up into five separate themes. Because there was no fixed pattern, the dance really didn't make sense. The dance definitely did not flow together. Well, that was the purpose of her dance—fragments.

Fig. 3. Three Responses to Clustering the Word *Fragments* (Continued from previous page)

In summary, clustering engenders and encourages expressive behavior at all levels of proficiency. As with any useful tool, be it pen or paintbrush, the more it is used, the more natural its use becomes. In my own teaching I have made clustering an integral part of all the writing assignments, long or short, and suggest further that it be introduced as a right-brain tool from the earliest grades onward. The most effective means for getting the *feel* of clustering is to introduce it conjointly with journal writing. Journal writing, long a part of most English curricula with limited success, will take on new dimensions through the focusing power of clustering. As students begin to experience that sense of accomplishment in actually producing a cluster, they discover that they do have something to say after all. They also discover that writing begins to flow on its own if a sense of play is allowed to enter the process. The student's evaluation of clustering in Figure 4 focuses precisely on this play-element of clustering.

Yes, clustering is "fooling around," indeed. Instead of writing as sheer labor, clustering turns writing into something closer to cultivated play. In so doing, such "fooling around" makes contact with our natural right-brain potential for creating connections, for perceiving one idea related to another, and for seeing the world whole.

> *The highest cultural achievement of any nation, the arts notwithstanding, is its language.*
>
> EDWARD G. AND RICHARD S. GANNON



I sat down to work in order to catch up on some journal entries when my mother stood over my shoulder and noticed my clustering. Puzzled, she inquired, "Why are you fooling around making circles when you have work to do?" It seemed a silly idea to her, and it did to me also when I first encountered it. However, I have come to admire my little circles, for it is those circles with words in them that generate thoughts, bring back experiences, and enable me to use my mind to the utmost.

Clustering can be summed up in one word: wonderful. I have learned something that I will carry with me for the rest of my life; that is, I have learned to generate ideas. Thank goodness for those circles.

Fig. 4. A Student's Evaluation of Clustering

EDITOR'S NOTE: For further information on clustering, see Gabriele Rico and Mary Frances Claggett's monograph, *Balancing the Hemispheres: Brain Research and the Teaching of Writing*, which was published in 1980 by the Bay Area Writing Project, 615 University Hall, Room 1040, University of California, Berkeley, CA 94720-1040. You will also find helpful Dr. Rico's book *Writing the Natural Way: Using Right Brain Techniques to Release Your Expressive Powers*, published in 1983. It was published by J. P. Tarcher, Inc., 9110 Sunset Blvd., Suite 250, Los Angeles, CA 90069, and distributed by Houghton Mifflin Co.

Practical Ideas for Using Clustering in the Prewriting Stage

It Works!

By Elizabeth B. Martinez

English Teacher, Saddleback High School,
Santa Ana Unified School District:
and Teacher/Consultant, UCI Writing Project

Several years ago I attended the annual conference of the California Association of Teachers of English, which was held in San Diego, California. Little did I realize that clustering, a prewriting technique presented at the conference by Gabriele Rico, would have such a powerful and positive impact on me. Not only did it influence my professional and personal life, but it also influenced the lives of my students and colleagues who were later exposed to it.

As I observed Dr. Rico's excellent presentation, I instantly felt that this was exactly what I had been searching for: a simple approach that would involve not just some of my students but rather all my students at any level of writing ability. Needless to say, I could hardly wait to get back to school to try it in my classes.

Daily, my students clustered words and then sentences; later they combined sentences and finally learned to develop a unified paragraph from the original cluster. I soon discovered that clustering could be used to teach almost any facet of an English program. What amazed me the most, however, was the strong response of acceptance with which the students received this technique. After three months of daily practice, I requested an anonymous response to this clustering. I was not surprised. The students overwhelmingly expressed enthusiasm with words of praise and appreciation for this "fun" activity. The one statement that consistently recurred was that the fear of writing had been greatly reduced. The students' attitudes toward writing over the three months had gradually improved. They had become more confident, their assignments were better prepared, and, finally, their grades reflected their success.

In conclusion, I must confess that I was ready to "throw in the towel," so to speak, after repeated years of hit-and-miss failures and successes in the teaching of writing. My personal good fortune of being exposed to clustering revolutionized and revitalized my career. I am now completing my twelfth year at Saddleback High School, and each new group of students that comes through my door receives a shower of clustering experiences. I can enthusiastically say, "I have not given up as a teacher of writing." I feel I am living testimony to the effectiveness and positive results of clustering.

Using Clustering as a Study Skill

By Susan Starbuck

English Teacher, Jordan High School,
Long Beach Unified School District;
and Teacher/Consultant, UCI Writing Project

Because clustering is a holistic process, it is a useful technique for review and study, especially for the essay exam. Through clustering, students can visually chart what they do and do not know, returning to their notes to fill in the blank areas in their charts. In the process they will discover and generate their own key or stimulus words that can be reduced and converted to easily memorized lists. As a result of this thorough review, clustering will build the students' confidence so that they can function well in an exam, even if they have to answer unanticipated questions. There are seven steps for using clustering to study for an essay exam:

1. *Review class materials and identify what is important.* Usually, before an exam, students

Clustering is a useful technique for review and study, especially for the essay exam.

SUSAN STARBUCK

have some idea of what the teacher has considered the most important. Either the teacher designates the important areas during a review session and gives sample questions, or when reviewing their notes, the students identify key words and concepts the teacher has repeated several times. Likewise, the textbook usually contains the repeated key words and concepts in chapter headings and subheadings that reinforce what the teacher has presented. As they review their textbook, students should jot down all the key words and concepts.

2. *Make preliminary clusters.* Using the designated questions and/or the repeated key words and concepts as stimulus centers, the students make clusters to test their comprehension of the material. In some classes, however, the teacher has not indicated what is important, and the notes the students have taken do not seem to be helpful. Therefore, after identifying what seems to be important, the students may want to do some reflecting by focusing on the class as a whole by using these questions to begin a clustering process: What has been the purpose of the class? What were the recurring themes, characters, and patterns in what we have been reading? The students further cluster each of the ideas that emerge through their master clusters, such as individual books, authors, periods, and so forth. By the time they complete this process, they will have a very good grasp of the dimensions of the class.
3. *Self-check.* When the students finish the clusters, they can go back to the original material in the notes and textbook to do a self-checking and to add any missing pieces to their clusters.
4. *Reduce material to basic clusters and stimulus words.* Because the students are testing their own recall by drawing on the right brain, they will not only be reviewing what they have already assimilated but will also be discovering and creating their own stimulus words. After making their preliminary clusters, the students may cluster again, using their own stimulus words as they focus the material more and more; their goal is to reduce both clusters and stimulus words to the simplest possible form. As soon as they have condensed and focused the clusters, they will be able to make simple lists of stimulus words that are important for the exam.
5. *Memorize simplified lists from clusters.* Memorization will ensure that stimulus words are readily available for the exam.
6. *Review final cluster(s) on the morning before the exam.* A last-minute review of their stimulus words will give the students confidence that they are knowledgeable about a number of different aspects of the subject.
7. *Cluster around specific test questions.* When they receive their questions at the exam, the students should spend a few minutes making specific clusters that will stimulate their memories and help them organize their thoughts in the terms presented by the question.

Having followed the seven-step process outlined above, the students will have reviewed and made the material so completely their own by translating it into their own words that they will be able to react with some insight to almost any question the teacher asks. On an essay exam the students will be able to construct answers that reveal their knowledge; for more than any other kind of exam, the essay obeys the rule Gabriele Rico quotes from Henry James, "The whole of anything is never told. You can take only what groups together." The students who use clustering will know immediately what "groups" they have available to formulate a good answer.

Propagating Clusters

By Michael O'Brien

English Instructor, Allan Hancock College, Santa Maria; and Teacher/Consultant, UCI Writing Project

Think of them as flowers. Clusters do, after all, resemble flowers whose petals burst forth from the central corolla. Note that clusters do beautifully in both remedial and advanced classes but need to be tended faithfully.

Clusters have been very helpful to me in increasing student fluency. Even after I have done some practice ones on the board, however, some students have had a difficult time getting started on this technique. Be patient. They will become adept at clustering within a few days—a few petals at first, full blooms later on.

Clusters also do well in the "rarefied" atmosphere of the advanced classes. Use them in discussing literature, especially to show comparison and contrast. For example, look at how effectively my classes were able to contrast the two main settings of Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra* (see Figure 5).

Finally, for best results, cultivate clusters faithfully. Use them for your own writing. Ask students to cluster often in a variety of situations. Because we so rarely assign tasks in high school that use the right hemisphere of the brain, students need to be reminded constantly of the clustering method.

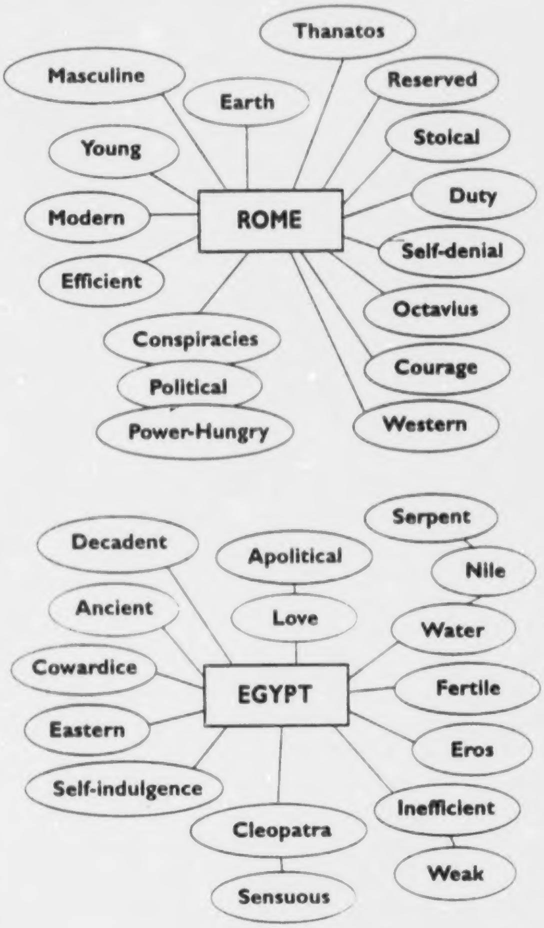
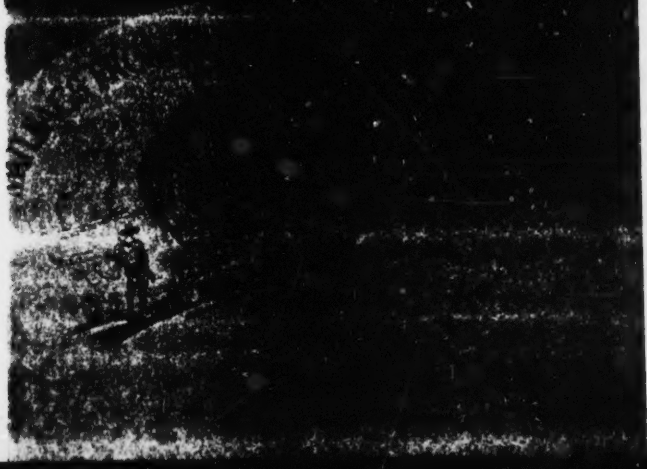

Thanatos
Masculine
Earth
Reserved
Stoical
Young
Duty
Modern
ROME
Self-denial
Efficient
Octavius
Conspiracies
Courage
Political
Power-Hungry
Western
Serpent
Decadent
Apolitical
Nile
Ancient
Love
Water
Cowardice
EGYPT
Fertile
Eastern
Eros
Self-indulgence
Inefficient
Cleopatra
Weak
Sensuous

Fig. 5. Contrasting the Main Settings in *Antony and Cleopatra*

Prewriting in Different Subjects



Prewriting Assignments Across the Curriculum

Science + English = Success

By Jim Lee
English Teacher
Rancho Santa Margarita Intermediate School,
Saddleback Valley Unified School District;
and Teacher/Consultant, UCI Writing Project

It has long been a premise of mine that students can benefit greatly from some sort of prewriting activity. No matter what the assigned topic may be, it is to your advantage as a teacher to get your students' thoughts flowing freely. Then the students need to put the thoughts on paper so that they become workable parts that may be pieced together to form the "perfect" paper that most students believe they should be able to write.

The prewriting activity that I have selected to describe for you is one I used in conjunction with a series of science experiments on a well-known backyard mollusk—the snail. My goal was twofold: (1) to integrate scientific observation and experimentation with the teaching of composition; and (2) to provide a concrete experience that would enable my students to grasp the abstract concept of aestivation and its application to backyard mollusks. As you may or may not know, *aestivation* is a state of physical inactivity (dormancy or hibernation) that the snails go into when they are deprived of food and water.

I began this activity by giving every student an aestivating snail and instructed my students to examine their respective snails for color, texture, shape, size, and so forth. Then I asked the students to record their observations in clusters, an activity that provided them with a foundation for eventual sentence and paragraph development. (See Figure 1 for an example of the clustering of observations.)

After the students had clustered their thoughts about the aestivating snail, each student put a drop of water on his or her snail's body and watched as it emerged from its shell. The students then clustered their observations of the snails emerging from aestivation, as illustrated in Figure 1.

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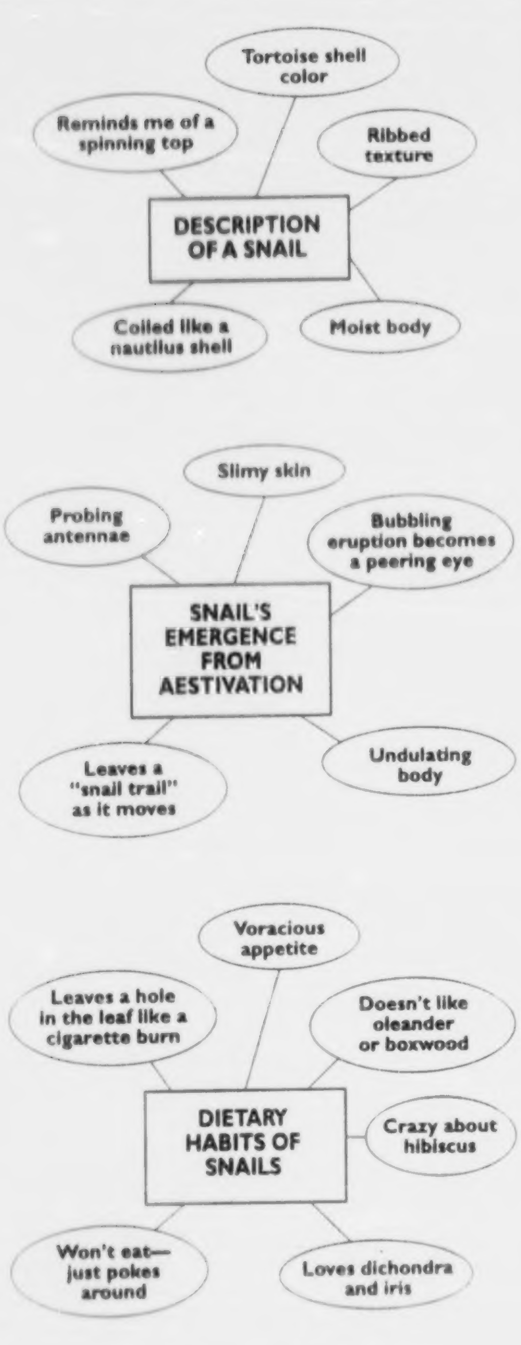

Tortoise shell color
Reminds me of a spinning top
Ribbed texture
DESCRIPTION OF A SNAIL
Coiled like a nautilus shell
Moist body
Slimy skin
Probing antennae
Bubbling eruption becomes a peering eye
SNAIL'S EMERGENCE FROM AESTIVATION
Leaves a "snail trail" as it moves
Undulating body
Voracious appetite
Leaves a hole in the leaf like a cigarette burn
Doesn't like oleander or boxwood
DIETARY HABITS OF SNAILS
Crazy about hibiscus
Won't eat—just pokes around
Loves dichondra and iris

Fig. 1. Clustering the Descriptions and Observations of Snails

The next step in the prewriting activity was to observe snails eating. We gave the snails a variety of leaves that were native to the immediate environment (in other words, whatever can be collected during the morning before the afternoon lesson). The students then recorded in a third set of clusters the snails' dietary habits, as shown in the third part of Figure 1.

From this experimental/sensory prewriting activity, the students orally shared with the rest of the class the results of their clustering. I had all of the information that the students volunteered recorded on the chalkboard and categorized under one of the three headings: Description, Emergence from Aestivation, and Eating Habits. As an example, a class of seventh grade honor students developed the following list of descriptions of aestivating snails:

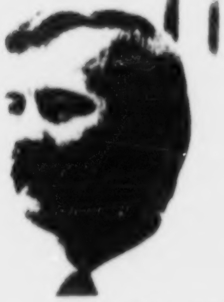
Basic brown
Coiled like a nautilus shell
Sealed like a tomb
Dead
Tortoise shell color
Bizarre striations
Ribbed texture
Smooth strips with bumps in between
Reminds me of a spinning top
Spirals out like a pinwheel
Intricate pattern fades as it nears the opening
Yellowish tan and dark brown stripes
Looks like a ram's horn from the side
Gross!
Looks like Princess Leah's hair
Has multicolored ribs along the shell
Ribs get farther apart as they move away from the center
Boring
Fragile looking

After a period of sharing observations, the students took the sentence fragments and turned them into simple sentences. Then they shared their sentences, and a lesson on sentence combining evolved from the collected responses, as shown in the following example:

Original Simple Sentences

1. My snail is basically brown.
2. A snail shell is coiled like a nautilus shell.
3. An aestivating snail is sealed like a tomb.

> *Once your students understand that good writing is a product of systematically acquired skills and that those skills are learned rather than inherited, they will be much more optimistic about becoming good writers.*
>
> JIM LEE



4. An aestivating snail looks dead.
5. A snail is colored like a tortoise.
6. A "backyard mollusk" has bizarre striations on its shell.
7. The intricate pattern on a snail shell fades as it nears the opening.
8. A snail shell is fragile.
9. A snail shell spirals out from the center.
10. A snail has a gold, tan, and dark brown shell.
11. The pattern of a snail shell is less impressive toward the opening.

Sentences in Combined Form

1. The snail's coiled shell is fragile.
2. An aestivating snail appears to be dead and is sealed in a fragile tomb made of shell.
3. A snail has a shell with gold, tan, and dark brown striations.
4. A snail shell has an intricate pattern of gold, tan, and dark brown striations that fade to a basic brown as they approach the opening.

These activities covered the spectrum of experiential, oral, and written prewriting and provided my students with a foundation from which they could write a descriptive, narrative, or expository essay.

The following are examples of prompts that were an outgrowth from our experiments:

1. *Descriptive*. Write an account of a day in the life of a snail. Write from the snail's perspective, and include as much specific detail as possible. Incorporate as much factual data as possible to give added credence to your writing. Use as many sensory / descriptive phrases as possible.
2. *Narrative*. Write a story in which you speculate or fantasize about how the snail got its shell.
3. *Expository*. Suppose that the sun is moving closer to the earth each day. Using the theories of natural selection and survival of the fittest, project what physical changes might occur in the snail as it attempts to cope with its changing environment.

As a California Writing Project zealot, I would be remiss if I did not encourage, cajole, and, yes, even beg you to become actively involved in the teaching of composition.

Through the use of prewriting activities and well-designed prompts, you can convince your students that writing, although painful at times, can be exciting, challenging, and rewarding. Once your students understand that good writing is a product of systematically acquired skills and that those skills are learned rather than inherited, they will be much more optimistic about becoming good writers.

Practical Ideas for Prewriting in Different Subjects

Developing Fluency Through Poetic Dialogue

By Michael Carr
Teacher, Valley Junior High School,
Carlsbad Unified School District;
and Teacher/Consultant, UCI Writing Project

and Erline S. Krebs
Elementary Field Supervisor,
Department of Teacher Education,
Chapman University;
and Teacher/Consultant, UCI Writing Project

The word is alive
The poem is alive
The poet is alive within his poem
and is speaking to us.
If we wish, we may answer him
by weaving our voices into conversations
which create a new kind of poetic dialogue.
In so doing we come to know the poet
and his poem in a special way
and create poems as a result of this dialogue.

by Toby Lurie
from *Conversations and Constructions*[1]

When you are introducing elementary school students to poetry, it is not enough to give them a model of a haiku, cinquain, or other poetic form and expect them to write. We have found that our students are fearful of expressing themselves freely through poetry. It is evident that they have many preconceived notions about poetry—that it must rhyme, be easy to memorize, have only so many syllables per line, and so forth—and an overall feeling of "I can't do this."

As with any writing assignment, it is necessary to provide students with prewriting activities. In this case we want them to see that writing poetry can be as easy and comfortable as having a conversation with a friend. That is why we focus on the idea of dialoguing with poetry.

We begin by inviting our students to cluster their thoughts, feelings, and attitudes around the word *poetry*, as in Figure 2.

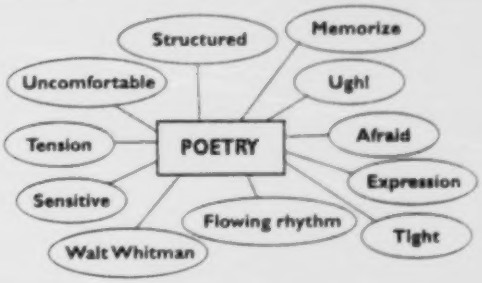


Fig. 2. Clustering of Thoughts and Feelings Around *Poetry*

As a group we take a look at the "cluster" and notice what it is saying. Then we discuss some of the myths and fears surrounding poetry. Next, we introduce the concept of dialoguing as a natural way of expressing ourselves, a process we do daily in our conversations with each other. For example, we might say, "Mike, have you noticed the mountains this morning?"

Mike may respond, "You bet. I would love to be skiing right now!" It is as simple as that.

We now have our students respond orally to any line we give them. We tell our students not to "think about" or "figure out" their responses, just express what comes naturally.

Using the same natural process, our students are now invited to participate in a written dialogue. We use Carl Sandburg's "Summer Grass."

Summer Grass[2]

Summer grass aches and whispers.
It wants something; it calls and sings; it pours
out wishes to the overhead stars.
The rain hears; the rain answers; the rain is slow
coming; the rain wets the face of the grass.

By Carl Sandburg

---

[1] Toby Lurie, *Conversations and Constructions*. 150 Seal Rock Dr., San Francisco, CA 94121. © 1978. Used by permission of the poet.

[2] "Summer Grass." From *Good Morning, America*, copyright 1928 and renewed 1956 by Carl Sandburg. Reprinted by permission of Harcourt Brace & Company. (*Note*: Carl Sandburg's poem will work equally well with students at higher grade levels, as will this entire concept.)

By using the prewriting process of dialoguing as a natural extension of conversation, our students develop greater freedom and confidence in both their oral and written expression.

ERLINE S. KREBS

As we read a line of the *frame*, each student copies that line of poetry on a piece of paper and then writes his or her response directly underneath. The following is an example of a fifth grade student's (Jennifer's) response:

Summer grass aches and whispers. (Carl Sandburg's "Summer Grass")
Rain on the grass and wind blowing. (Jennifer)

It wants something:
The baby wants a toy.

it calls and sings;
Birds perching in trees

it pours out wishes
It is raining wishes

to the overhead stars.
Twinkling stars up in the air

The rain hears;
The clouds talk, people hear, the rain falls;

the rain answers;
The clouds listen;

the rain is slow coming;
The rain is very slow, it's sprinkling;

the rain wets the face of the grass.
The grass gets wet, the grass likes water.

By Jennifer Michelle

This process allows for a personal involvement with the poem and transforms the experience of poetry from the dull process of analysis and memorization to the intimate relationship of conversation.

Now the students have an opportunity to share their creations aloud. As we read a line of the frame, a student reads his or her response. We do this with several students on a one-to-one basis, and then we expand the process to include two or more students in order to form a three- or four-person poem. The following is an example of a two-person dialogue with "Summer Grass":

Summer grass aches and whispers. (Carl Sandburg's "Summer Grass")
Rain on the grass and wind blowing. (Jennifer)
Summer grass smells good. (Travis)

It wants something:
The baby wants a toy:
It is hungry:

it calls and sings;
birds perching in trees;
it sings a song;

it pours out wishes
it is raining wishes
it pours out your wish

to the overhead stars.
twinkling stars up in the air.
looking through a telescope.

The rain hears;
The clouds talk, people hear, the rain falls;
People like rain;

the rain answers;
the clouds listen;
the rain hears you, the rain listens;

the rain is slow coming;
the rain is very slow, it's sprinkling;
it's raining slowly;

the rain wets the face of the grass.
the grass gets wet, the grass likes water.
the grass drinks water.

By Jennifer Michelle and *Travis Bare*

Again, we read Carl Sandburg's frame aloud as Jennifer and Travis read their responses to each line.

As the students experience success and confidence in this process, we now remove the *frame* and introduce the concept of the *silent exchange*. The students select a partner and, together, they participate in a written dialogue with each other. This exercise is done in silence. One student begins and writes a line; the second student responds to that line. They alternate (in silence) until their "poem" is complete. They may illustrate their paper (still in silence) and place it on a bulletin board in the room. Sharing their poem orally with the class adds a special dimension. The following are two examples of the silent exchange done by fifth grade students:

Hot summer sun is shining.
Everyone is at the beach.
The waves are talking.
Are they talking to you?
We go home in the dark, cool wind.
Are you going to stay home?
The wind is blowing.
The wind is blowing the trees down.
It is very cold and windy.
So I sit by the fireplace.
The wind blows the fire out,
So I light the match and stick it in the fireplace.
I want to sleep by the fireplace.
I dream about going to the beach again.

By Eleanor Velez and *Sara Zampogna*

A nice and pretty flower . . .
It sits in the grass dripping with water.
The grass is wet and green . . .
We step on the wet green grass.
Unicorns are nice and magicful . . .
Their horns are gold and pretty.
Pegasus is pretty too . . .
With white shining wings.
Leaves on a tree are brown and orange . . .
They lie on the ground in autumn.
The trees have many colors . . .
Nice colors and gold leaves.

By Jennifer Camia and *Becky Pendleton*

We have found that by using the prewriting process of dialoguing as a natural extension of conversation, our students develop greater freedom and confidence in both their oral and written expression. The students "come alive" as they discover their own special "poet within." Now they are ready to dialogue with the self and produce poetry that is uniquely their own.

Journal Writing Across the Curriculum

By Margaret (Peg) Serences

Former English Department Chairperson,
Niguel Hills Junior High School,
Capistrano Unified School District;
and Teacher/Consultant, UCI Writing Project

During the first UCI Writing Project in the summer of 1978, using journal writing in the classroom was discussed and demonstrated. Speakers stressed that the goal of using this writing approach was fluency. I was intrigued because I am always anxious to find new ways to encourage students to write. Of the varying forms then mentioned—e.g., diary entry, autobiographical sketch, creative writing exercises, learning aid, and idea collecting—I chose to incorporate the creative writing journal format in my seventh and eighth grade curricula. For three days a week, students were asked to write for ten to fifteen minutes on a topic, which was generally teacher-selected. I found this type of journal writing especially productive when I imposed a time limit, and it provided a prewriting stimulus to get my students writing.

In the English classroom I had students keep their journal entries in a special writing folder. After the writing folder contained several writing samples, the students selected one of their favorites to rewrite and develop into a short composition. Working in groups of four (students were allowed to form their own groups), each student would then read the rewritten composition aloud to the

> *The journal writing assigned in other disciplines reinforced and, therefore, strengthened our English program.*
>
> MARGARET SERENCES

EDITOR'S NOTE. We especially acknowledge the contributions of Travis Bare, Jennifer Camia, Jennifer Michelle, Becky Pendleton, Eleanor Velez, and Sara Zampogna, who were fifth grade students at the Los Alamitos Elementary School when this article was written.

other members of the group. I stressed the importance of "hearing" their own words; this proved an excellent tool for catching sentence fragments and run-on sentences. Next, each student graded each of the four compositions, using the response guide that I provided. Finally, I graded all the papers myself, giving a grade for the compositions and a separate grade for the student's ability to grade someone else's work.

Since I had such good results with journal writing in my classes, I began to wonder how this writing approach would work in other disciplines. As chairperson of the English Department, I encouraged teachers in mathematics, music, physical education, science, and social studies to try weekly or biweekly journal writing projects. I stressed that students could write to discover what they had learned about a subject and that teachers could use their students' journals as a way of determining how effectively they were teaching. Several teachers volunteered to initiate journal writing to see whether it would be a useful learning tool. Here are some student writing samples from other curricular areas:

> *Physical education:* Why I like baseball best of all!
>
> I like baseball because . . . it's fun to *try* to hit the little ball and run around the bases. It's exciting to throw the ball to another player to get the runner out. Baseball is a game of skill. It takes lots of practice to be good. You have to have a good coach too. When you're in a league, you can meet people and make friends, learn things, and have fun. Also, if you have a good team, you can win a trophy. When the season is over, you get to keep the hats and the friends too. That is why I like baseball.
>
> *Music:* Compare three selections of music.
>
> After listening to the three pieces of music, I've decided that they all have a beat of some kind. First let me define beat—pulse. But after listening to the third piece, "Sounds," it seems to be different from the others because the first two seemed to use more instruments that flowed into a steady rhythm. They also had a more defined melody and harmony, so it blended together to create music.
>
> *Science:* What did you learn from dissecting a frog?
>
> *Purpose:* Mrs. "B" told us to, so we could learn more about the internal parts of a frog.
>
> *Observation:* On the frog I cut open, I noticed that the skin is almost like rubber. When we cut open the frog, we saw a layer of muscles, which was gross looking. Then we cut that apart and saw a bunch of yellow intestine-looking things. Mrs. "B" told us it was where she produces the eggs, so we had a girl. Her insides are very clear to see. It was a good study.
>
> *Conclusion:* I think the frog's insides are clear, easy to observe, and neat.
>
> *Drama:* How do you express emotions on stage?
>
> I make my emotions on stage by thinking I am really that person. I try to really get into it. I remember how people in real life would act. Before I get on stage, I have to make my emotions first. I try not to be me acting like someone else. I try to be them.
>
> *Social studies:* What was life like in the Colonies?
>
> Life in the Colonies was pretty good because it was easier to get land here, and in Europe it was hard. It was bad for the slaves because they were bought and sold. It turned gloomy in 1763 because England was in debt in the war, and so they started taxing the Colonies. Then the Colonies got mad at England and the Revolutionary War started, and the Colonies won the war.

With the insights gained from journal writing, several teachers, especially in the area of social studies, began to integrate writing in their respective subject areas. I also noticed the use of essay questions as a replacement for the standard multiple-choice examination. It seems to me that the journal writing assigned in other disciplines reinforced and, therefore, strengthened our English program. At the same time, it enabled students to explore what they thought about a given topic in a way that could never be expressed in a fill-in-the-blank or true-false examination.

Guided Imagery in the Social Studies

By Dale Sprowl
Former English Teacher, Irvine High School,
Irvine Unified School District;
and Teacher/Consultant, UCI Writing Project

A successful method for teaching social studies concepts is guided imagery. It can be used to help students visualize and, thus, internalize different times and places. Writing for secondary social studies classes is generally in the analytical/

expository domain, but guided imagery provides students with sensory/descriptive data that involve them personally and give them a foundation for further writing. The technique can also be used to introduce ideas in a unit of study when the culmination of the unit is the writing of an analytical/expository essay.

To teach a concept, such as the impact of technology on humans, I begin with an image of a present familiar situation. For example, if I were teaching about the industrial revolution and how the invention of machines changed history, I would ask the students to close their eyes and picture themselves in their bathrooms getting ready for school. Then I would ask them to erase any machine from their mental picture. I have them take away their blow dryers, electric toothbrushes or curlers, and the lights in the bathroom. Then I have them move to the bedroom and erase the stereo and the clothes or furniture that were made in factories. In the living room, I have the students erase the television, video games, and electric lights; in the kitchen, the refrigerator, stove, dishwasher, washer, dryer, and so on. (This image would have to be modified for low socioeconomic students.) After the students have erased appliances, large and small, I ask them to take away the walls and the carpet or floor, because the entire structure is made from machine-made goods. (A colleague of mine uses a similar image to teach about poverty.)

After creating the image, I ask the students to open their eyes, and we discuss how life was more difficult before the industrial revolution. Then I ask them to write about the differences they can see in the lifestyle before and after the industrial revolution, including the problems that people of that time period had but that we do not have and the problems that we have but that they did not have. The technique involves students and helps them to learn about the impact of machines on human beings and to consider and evaluate the results of technological change. Similar guided imageries could be used to teach concepts about the results of hunger, genetic engineering, nuclear war, and many other topics.

Mailbags and Miscellany: Writing in History Classes

By Laurel Corona
Director of OASIS,
University of California, San Diego

Most young people enjoy writing when the assignments are enjoyable and allow them to use their imagination, their sense of humor, and their growing sensitivity to the life situations of others. The following two class activities promote this kind of pleasure in writing and allow for creative expression outside the English classroom: mailbags from historical sites and miscellany.

Mailbags from Historical Sites

Mailbags from Historical Sites is a class project, but each student is completely responsible for his or her own part of the mail in the bag and for helping create a mailbag as it might have been filled when it left an important historical site. The mail in the bag should represent the writings of as full a range of people in the community as possible, and the destinations of the letters should be as diverse as possible. The purpose of the assignment is to enable the students to sense the ambiance of another place and time and to feel the past as if they were living in it.

In preparation for creating the mailbag, the students should make a list of the people apt to be in a particular place at a particular time. For example, in a Gold Rush town, one might find miners, dance hall girls, preachers and their wives, stable boys, horse thieves, cowboys, teachers, doctors, merchants, and so on. Each of these persons would be living a different life in this town and have a different attitude about being there. For the most part, they would not care about or even be aware of being a part of history. They would be concerned primarily with their daily lives. Each of these people would have different reasons for sending mail.

MAILBAGS FROM HISTORICAL SITES

After developing a large list of people in a Gold Rush town and discussing how each might view life there, the students should then project what kinds of letters each might write and to whom. For instance, a preacher's wife might be miserable and write to tell her mother so. The preacher might be inquiring about inexpensive Bibles. A horse thief about to be hung might write to bid farewell to his true love. After this part of the project has been thoroughly brainstormed, the students should pick the character that interests them the most and then write a letter for the bag. The teacher should encourage the students to adopt a writing style, tone, and point of view appropriate to the character they are writing through.

Some creative student might make a bag at home, or one could be fashioned from a paper sack. The most likely way to display the completed project would be to create a montage in the classroom, perhaps with colored string connecting each letter to the bag. Wall space and grade level would, of course, dictate how such a project would be "published."

Miscellany

Miscellany is a class project that is similar to the one featuring mailbags, but more of the work should be done in small groups. Rather than create the finished products that letters represent, in the miscellany activity the students create the debris of an important historical event. For instance, they might imagine what General Ulysses S. Grant's tent looked like after the deciding battle of the Civil War or what his quarters at Appomattox looked like several days later. As a way of comparing and contrasting the two sides in the war, the class might be divided into a group responsible for creating the miscellany of the Union general's side and a group responsible for the Confederate general's miscellany. Miscellany might consist of battle plans, discarded communiques, drafts of speeches, letters to and from home or the President, and so forth. To create good, verisimilar debris, the students would have to research the subject thoroughly. Because of this, a project of this sort, if expectations are clearly delineated, makes an excellent alternative to a term paper.

Both of the projects described previously can be suited to different grade levels and ability levels and also to different subject matter. Although history students would probably benefit most from such activities, teachers of other subjects might also be able to adapt these ideas for their classes. For example, if a science class is learning about Louis Pasteur or Pierre and Marie Curie or Galileo or if an art class is studying Vincent van Gogh or Michelangelo Buonarroti or Pablo Picasso, the miscellany project might be adapted. Similarly, students of Spanish or any other foreign language might create a town and its inhabitants and create a mailbag from that town.

And, teachers, do not let your students have all the fun. Indulge your own fantasies about dance hall girls or cattle rustlers. Willingness to do your own assignments is the single best way to validate them in your students' eyes.

Just a Few Words on Sentence Combining Across the Curriculum

By William Lomax

English Teacher, Benjamin Franklin High School,
Los Angeles Unified School District

Note: **The following is a sample of my address regarding sentence combining to a group of 32 high school teachers from several areas.**

All right, how many of you out there . . . (Is everybody listening?) . . . how many of you have used sentence combining in your classroom in the last, oh, six months? Three, five, six, seven . . . Sir, is your hand up? Okay, eight. That's it? All right, how many of you eight are English teachers? All eight, huh. What about the other, um, 24 of you? What do you teach? History . . . Spanish . . . science . . . government. And how many of you get consistently poor writing from your students? Okay, and how many of you would like to get better writing from your students? It's unanimous again. Well, my friends, let's talk about sentence combining. It may be able to help.

I won't take your time now to go through the research and theory of sentence combining; it's a well-established technique. There are plenty of books available, and it's basically a very simple process. Just ask your local English teacher for a little assistance. I've used sentence combining for several years, and I'm going to describe for you what I think works best.

Sentence-combining work should be regular, but never routine. Establish your pattern; then keep it going, but vary it. Have students write the exercises one day; then do them orally the next. Give them as homework, do group work or choral readings, and have competitions between the groups. Use your imagination and sustain a sense of play. Above all, keep at it. After students have learned the basic system, you may spend as little as five minutes a day, three times a week, on sentence combining. It doesn't take much time, but it should be regular and continuous. There is no goal to sentence combining except better writing, so use it throughout the year. Remember, too, that there are no "wrong" answers in sentence combining, only "better sentence combinations." Help students to see that writing is a process and a skill, not something that is right or wrong.

A single page—five to eight exercises—is enough for one day, once the routine is established, but even that can be varied. I prefer to use at least *two* pages per session. The four basic "signals" used by Frank O'Hare to instruct students (underlining, cross-outs, SOMETHING words, and parentheses) are easily learned, but they are addictive.[1] They are harder to unlearn than to learn. That's why I regularly give one page *with* signals and one page *without* signals *from the beginning*. Start students off with signals with something simple, like this:

I drove the car onto the freeway.
I drove the car slowly.

I mean, really simple, right? You won't insult students' intelligence, because you'll steadily increase the difficulty of the exercises—never faster, however, than they can do them correctly. You will be surprised, I suspect, at how fast they will progress to more complex exercises, once the signals are learned.

Now, I think the English teachers here are probably familiar with all the different ways sentence combining can be used—to teach vocabulary, sentence structure, grammar, paragraphing, punctuation, literature—all that "stuff" that goes on in an English classroom.[2] But what about you other teachers? You're all sitting politely, but the muscles in your cheeks are twitching. You're all asking, what's in it for me, right? What's in it is better writing—for *all* classrooms. Just a few minutes ago, you all said that's what you wanted.

Here's the point: *Combining* means more than just putting sentences together. It also means *combining form* and *content*. That is, while you're giving your students writing practice, they are simultaneously learning *your* subject matter. You teach history, you say? Then give them an exercise like this:

A man was burned at the stake.
The man was named Giordano Bruno.
He was burned in the year 1600.
He was burned in Rome.

And so on. Now that one is a far cry from the simple little starter we looked at earlier, but it shows where you can go with sentence combining. You science teachers, try this one:

1. Each nerve cell in the body has four major parts.
   One part is the dendrites, which receive messages from other cells.
   One part is the nerve cell body.
   One part is the axon down which the messages pass.
   One part is the synapses, which communicate with other cells.
2. Each axon is surrounded by a sheath of fatty material.
   This fatty material is known as myelin.
3. Myelin does three things.
   Myelin insulates axons so nerve messages are not short-circuited.
   Myelin gives the white matter of the brain its appearance.
   Myelin accounts for the large amounts of fatty cholesterol in the brain.

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[1] See Frank O'Hare, *Sentence-Combining: Improving Student Writing Without Formal Grammar Instruction*. Urbana, Ill.: National Council of Teachers of English, 1973. Also see Jerry Judd's commentary that appears later in this book.

[2] For further information see William Lomax, "Sentence Combining Across the Curriculum," *California English*, Vol. 16 (November-December, 1980), 18–21.

Those are advanced exercises—your early efforts being much simpler—but I think you can see my point: Students are practicing writing while dealing with the subject matter of *your* course.

Let's face it: Writing has, for some reason, been isolated in English classes. Students do learn to write there, but they don't see that what they learn in English is relevant to other classes—simply because we don't expect it of them. Writing should be taught in every classroom where it is used. No, we English teachers still teach writing as intensively as ever; the primary responsibility is still ours. But if you want better writing from your students, you must teach it for the same reason that an English teacher teaches history with Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter* and science with Jack London's short story "To Build a Fire." Sentence combining can help you to do just that without taking time from your own subject matter.

Now, before we take a break, there's time for just a couple of questions. Yes, ma'am, sentence-combining exercises do take time to prepare, but remember that you design them only once. They're good for the rest of your teaching career. Furthermore, there are plenty of books on the market that you may use instead of creating your own. When you do your own, however—especially you non-English teachers—you can match them to your particular course content. I keep nonconsumable class sets of each of my one-page lessons on file in the English office; other teachers can then check them out, use them, and return them for others to use. Students always write exercises on their own paper. Science teachers, get your whole department involved; share the work, and your files will grow quickly. Or ask your English teachers for assistance; they can use your exercises, too. Once your files are established, you'll have a resource that will remain valuable for years to come. And your students will be better writers.

One more word—and this is important—sentence combining is no substitute for a student's original writing. It is just a tool which hones writing ability. Always require students to apply what they learn from sentence combining to their own writing, and give them plenty of opportunity to do that.

Snake in the Grass: An Integrated Approach to Concept Formation

By Carl Babb

Former Science Teacher, Capistrano Valley High School,
Capistrano Unified School District;
and Instructor, Irvine Valley Community College

and Todd Huck

English Instructor, Rancho Santiago College,
Rancho Santiago Community College District;
and Teacher/Consultant UCI Writing Project

Picture this:

> It is third period. Out on the football field, lined up on the 50-yard line, are ten small groups of students. One member of each group is tensed and ready to run; some are crouched; some are poised like sprinters in a starting position. All are silent, waiting for the signal. Several yards in front of them, the teacher raises the silver whistle to his lips, inhales slowly, hesitates, and blows. Ten students burst across the line, heads down, eyes on the grass, each stopping suddenly and stooping to snatch a toothpick of red or yellow, blue or green. Now darting a few more steps and taking another plunging stoop, the runners scoop up another toothpick. From the 50-yard line, their teammates scream, cheer, and exhort them to get back across the starting line before the ten-second whistle sounds. All the runners but one cross the line as the whistle shrills. Knowing the rules, the latecomer turns and scatters his gathered toothpicks back across the grassy range in front of his team, while the racers from other teams wrap their collected toothpicks in tape and drop the small bundles into bags held by their teammates.

To the students, this game seems like a cross between a relay race and a treasure hunt, but what they soon discover is that they are experiencing and experimenting with an important scientific concept, the natural phenomenon of protective coloration. Students need no formal prior knowledge about protective coloration to play the game. In fact, it is better if they do not, for the lesson allows students to discover some of the broad dynamics of protective coloration through their own observations and conclusions. As such, this lesson serves as an ideal introduction to this scientific concept.

A large grassy area is needed to conduct the game. Students are divided into roughly ten teams, with approximately three members per team. Teams line up behind a line, leaving at least ten feet between each team. In front of each team, 40 colored toothpicks are randomly distributed in a specified area called a *range*. Each group of toothpicks *must* be made up of ten red, ten yellow, ten green, and ten blue toothpicks. The range should be about ten yards long and three yards wide (see Figure 3). Finally, each team must choose a member to be a *bagger* as well as a racer. The bagger's job is to collect toothpicks gathered during each race, to make sure they are taped together and labeled, and to save them in a bag for use during the next class.

To begin the game, the teacher blows a whistle. The first member of each team has ten seconds to run down the range, picking up as many toothpicks as possible, one toothpick per stoop. When the ten-second whistle blows again, each team member must be back across the starting line; or else he or she must return the collected toothpicks to the range. The players then wrap the gathered toothpicks in a piece of masking tape, label the taped group with the number of the race (Race #1, Race #2, and so forth), and drop the labeled group into the bagger's bag. The procedure of running races and labeling collected toothpicks is repeated until each group member has run three races.

Having played the game, the students are now ready to translate their kinesthetic experience into a carefully considered scientific concept. They will do this, in part, by using writing as a vehicle for discovery. Writing, we know, is not merely a means of recording previously learned information; it is a tool for clarifying and stimulating thinking and for analyzing, interpreting, and speculating about the meaning of gathered data.

Begin the second day's lesson by asking the students to picture this scene:

> Imagine a large, grassy plain. Among the animals that populate this grassy plain are four distinctly colored varieties of snakes. Some are reddish, some yellow, some blue, and some green. The natural predator that preys on these snakes is a large species of hawk. The hawks fly from mountains near the grassy plain, feeding on those snakes that they can find.

Now, ask students to cluster for two minutes about the connections they see between the sce-

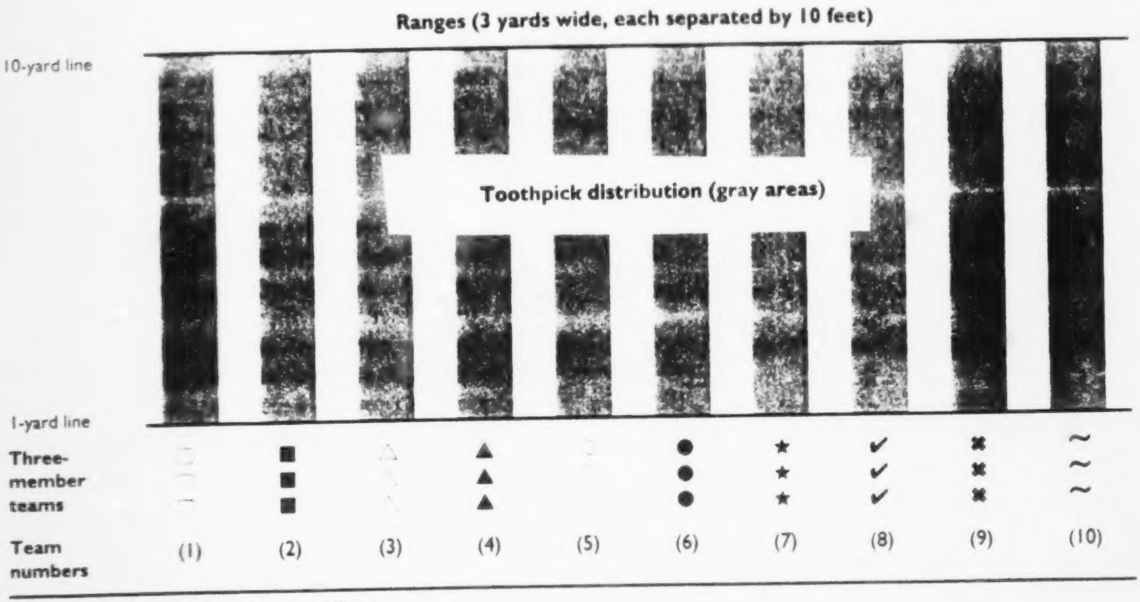

Fig. 3. A Diagram of Team Lines and Ranges

The formation and retention of concepts are deepened and enriched when students are actively involved in their learning.

TODD HUCK

nario you have just given them and yesterday's game. When the two minutes are up, take responses from class members about the parallels they have observed and cluster them on the chalkboard. Students are likely to see obvious connections between the game and the scenario; but if they do not go further in their thinking, ask them to do a *quickwrite* in which they consider which snakes are likely to get eaten most often and which ones might be least often victims of the hawks. You will probably get a consensus that the red and yellow snakes are more likely to be eaten more often than the blue and green snakes. Whatever their speculations, tell the students that they can check out their hypotheses and draw some conclusions about the factors that affect survival of the snakes by tabulating and analyzing the data they collected in yesterday's game.

Students meet in their teams and are given their bag of toothpicks and tables and data sheets (see Figure 4 for a sample). Students fill in Table 1 by counting the toothpicks gathered in each race and tallying the numbers of each color. Next, students total the number of toothpicks of all colors collected during each race and enter this value in the right-hand column. Table 2 simply helps students summarize and consolidate the data from Table 1.

Students now use their finished data sheets to write individual responses to the following data analysis questions. (An interesting option is to have students use their data sheets to generate questions of their own to answer before the teacher provides them with the data analysis questions.)

1. Refer to Table 2.
    a. What happens to the numbers of each toothpick color as you go down the chart?
    b. Why do you think this is so?
2. Refer to the right-hand column on Table 2.
    a. Look at the total number of toothpicks picked up over three sets of races. What happens to these numbers?
    b. Why do you suppose that this is so?
3. a. Which color(s) was (were) picked up most frequently?
    b. Draw a conclusion about why this is so.
4. a. Which colors were picked up least frequently?
    b. Why do you think that this is so?
5. As you picked up toothpicks, was it easier to pick them up if they were clustered close together or scattered far apart, or were they both equally easy to pick up?
6. As more and more toothpicks were removed from the grass, how did this affect the numbers you picked up?

When students finish the questions, have the teams meet, discuss their responses, and compile a set of answers that reflect their best collaborative thinking. Now lead a large group discussion about their answers, considering the kinds of thinking they had to do to get their answers. (An optional activity at this point is to draw a blank Table 3 on the chalkboard and collect the numbers and colors of toothpicks gathered for the sets of races from each of the groups to get classwide totals and averages. Students may then conclude whether data from Table 2 or Table 3 are more accurate and why, whether their small sampling of data from Table 2 showed a trend that was supported by data on Table 3, and how the total number of races influences the accuracy of the data.)

Participation in the game, speculation about its meaning, compilation of data, collaboration with peers, and interpretation of the assembled information all provide prewriting activities that can lead to a variety of writing experiences in different domains. Here are a few sample prompts based on our snakes and hawks scenario:

Analytical/Expository: The color of a snake may be helpful or harmful to its survival. Analyze and draw conclusions about how the color of a snake affects its chances for survival when it is the prey.

- How does the number of snakes in an area affect their chances for survival? Speculate about how it might be advantageous for animals to travel in groups.
- What can you guess or infer about how the color of a snake might affect its chances for survival when it is a predator?
- How might the data be different if the game were played on a red carpet instead of on grass?
- On the basis of the data you collected, which group of snakes do you think might first become extinct? Why? Speculate on what colors might be found in a group of snakes in a thousand years.

Practical/Informative. Write a snake survival manual. In the manual tell your snake-reader what it should know in order to survive. What should it know if it is brightly colored? If it is colored so that it blends with its environment? What should it consider when choosing the color and number of traveling companions? Are there times of day when it would be safer for it to feed and be active? Depending on its color, is it better for it to move quickly or to remain still when a predator is around? How might its color affect its search for food?

- Write a script for a television nature documentary that describes and explains the fate of a group of snakes over nine days. Use your data table as the basis of your script.

Imaginative/Narrative. Using diary entries, write an imaginary account of a week in the life of either a brightly colored snake or a snake that blends in with its environment. Consider some of these ideas. What might the snake encounter from day to day? What might it notice about the number and color of other snakes in its area over a period of time? What does it think about and experience because of its color? When does it eat? Why? How does its color affect its ability to get food? Does it travel with other snakes? How does it move when it feels threatened?

Students certainly could learn about the scientific concept of protective coloration through a

Table 1. Toothpicks Collected by One Team Over Nine 10-second Races *(Each team had three participants.)*

Number of race	*Number of toothpicks collected, by color*				*Total toothpicks per race*
	Red	*Yellow*	*Green*	*Blue*	
1	//	/	/	/	5
2	/	//	/		4
3	//	//		/	5
4		/	/	/	3
5	/	/	/	//	5
6	/			/	2
7	/	/			2
8		/		/	2
9	/		/	/	3

Table 2. Consolidation of Data from Table 1 into Three Divisions

Number of race	*Number of toothpicks collected, by color*				*Total toothpicks per race*
	Red	*Yellow*	*Green*	*Blue*	
Races 1—3	5	5	2	2	14
Races 4—6	2	2	2	5	11
Races 7—9	2	2	1	1	6

Table 3. Average Data Collected per Group, Based on Class Average (n = 6)

Number of race	*Number of toothpicks collected, by color*				*Total toothpicks per race*
	Red	*Yellow*	*Green*	*Blue*	
Races 1—3	6	7	3	4	20
Races 4—6	4	4	2	4	14
Races 7—9	4	3	1	2	10

Fig. 4. Three Tables of Data on Toothpick Experiment

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traditional means, such as a lecture, without going through the rigamarole of this game and its attendant activities. However, the quality of an educational experience and the formation and, especially, the retention of concepts that are embodied in it are deepened and enriched when students are actively involved in their learning, when they have a chance to collaborate and share insights, and when writing is integrated across the curriculum as a learning tool for heightening, refining, and clarifying thinking.

Writing to Learn Mathematics

By Ed Isaacs
Mathematics Teacher, Los Alamitos High School,
Los Alamitos Unified School District;
and Teacher/Consultant, UCI Writing Project

A few years ago, Los Alamitos Unified School District adopted writing across the curriculum as one of its major goals. Although the concept seemed interesting, no one really knew what it involved. Since I had just been selected the Writing Mentor for Science and Mathematics for Los Alamitos High School, I attended the UCI Writing Project Summer Institute in 1989 to prepare for my new role and to learn how I could make writing a part of mathematics classes. I would like to thank codirectors Carol Booth Olson, Todd Huck, and especially Catherine D'Aoust, for showing me that I was not a fish out of water and for helping me to see ways to integrate writing into science and mathematics classes.

The following writing assignments are just a few examples of how I integrated writing into my own classes during the 1989-90 academic year. Because of the demands of teaching in my discipline, I used these writing exercises to supplement my instruction and assigned them as homework.

Algebra I Writing Assignments

1. *I Am an Integer* (to help students understand the concept of integers)

   Imagine that you are an integer, your favorite integer. Tell me about yourself: Where are you located on the number line? Which integers are your closest neighbors on the number line? What friends do you have, and how do you play with them? How do you add, subtract, multiply, and divide with your friends? Who is your opposite? What is your absolute value? Are you odd or even? Are you positive, negative, or neither? Are there any "strange" numbers (that are not integers) between you and your next-door neighbors?

2. *Word Problem*

   Each of the following equations could represent a particular word problem. You are to choose one of them, make up a word problem that corresponds to the equation, and then write a story that involves that word problem. It could be a historical event, a fairy tale, or a fictional story.

   Motion: $8t = 10\,(t - 1/2)$

   Age: $4\,(x + 5) = 7x + 5$

   Area: $(x + 4)\,(x + 8) - x\,(x + 4) = 192$

   Money: $0.05(12x) + 0.10(4x) + 0.25(2x) + 0.50(x) = 10.00$

   Your title will be the equation that you have chosen. You should use several different characters in your story. You can use real people or make up the names. Be creative! Your story should have an introduction, a body, and a conclusion. Your story might even have a moral.

3. *Adventures on the Coordinate Plane* (followed a chapter on solving systems of equations and graphing equations)

   Imagine that you are a point on the coordinate plane. If you are on an axis, which axis is it, and on which side of the axis are you located? If you are in a quadrant, in which quadrant are you located? Roughly speaking, about how far away are you from the origin? (If you know the exact distance, you may use that.) What is the equation of the horizontal line through you? The vertical line? Give the equation of at least two oblique lines that pass through you, their point of intersection. Show that you are the solution to that system of equations by using the graphical method as well as the substitution method, the addition-subtraction method, or the multiplication-with-addition-subtraction method.

4. *Irrational Numbers* (followed a chapter on irrational numbers and square roots)

   Imagine that you are your favorite irrational number. You can be a radical (a square root) or any other irrational number that you want to make up. Tell me about yourself: Where are you located on the number line? Which integers are your closest neighbors on the number line? What is a rational decimal approximation to your number, to the nearest thousandth? Find two fractions, in the lowest terms, that are on either side of your number. Is your number the solution of an equation? (For example, if you are a square root, you are the solution to a quadratic equation; if a cube root, a cubic equation.) If it is, determine the equation and solve it. If not, explain why your number is an irrational number. Draw a graph of your number, locating it on the number line.

Algebra II/Trigonometry Writing Assignments

1. *How I Spent My Summer Vacation* (in response to the media attention given the *Voyager*'s landing on Neptune)

   You are to write a paper about how your summer vacation was spent, but from the point of view of *Voyager 2*. You will need to do some reading and research on what the mission of *Voyager 2* involved. You may answer such questions as:

   Which planet did you visit?

   How far from home (Earth) were you at the time?

   What did you discover about this planet that you did not know before?

   What did you find about any of its moons that You did not know before?

   You may write your paper on the *Voyager*'s discoveries about any of the four giant planets it visited: Jupiter (July, 1979), Saturn (August, 1981), Uranus (January, 1986), or Neptune (August, 1989).

   You should check accounts of these discoveries in newspapers, in news magazines such as *Time* and *Newsweek*, or in science magazines such as *Scientific American* and *Discover*.

2. *I Am a Parabola* (followed a chapter on quadratic functions)

   Imagine that you are a point moving on a quadratic function (a parabola). You can move only along the curve. Where are you when you begin your journey? How fast are you moving? What are the coordinates of the vertex of your parabola? What do you find when you pass through the vertex? Can you go backward as well as forward? What do you experience when you change direction? Does the parabola open upward or downward? What is the y-intercept? What are the x-intercepts? Give the coordinates of at least three other points that are on the parabola. Your paper may include drawings.

3. *Pizza Problem* (based on a problem in the textbook used in class)

   Go to a local pizza restaurant and, using the prices of the largest and smallest pizzas of any type, determine an equation for the price of the pizzas as a function of their diameters. Then, see whether the prices of any other sizes agree with your mathematical model. If they do agree, so indicate. If they do not agree, are they underpriced or overpriced? In your paper you are to state the problem, list the various sizes of pizzas and their prices in a chart, state the particular equation you find, and show how the actual prices compare with the prices predicted from the mathematical model. You may use illustrations in your paper, if you wish. Also, attach a copy of the restaurant's menu to verify your prices. This assignment may be done in a cooperative group with up to three other students.

4. *Probability Problem* (followed a chapter on probability)

   You are to write a probability problem that involves a binomial probability. You can "make up" the probability of an event, or you can conduct an experiment to determine the probability of the event. You should determine the probability of the event occurring zero, one, two, three, or four times out of four trials. Find the sum of the probabilities. Plot the graph of the probability distribution of this problem. Decide on some sort of "payoff" for this problem and find the mathematical expectation or expected value. **Show all calculations on a separate sheet of paper.**

I graded the rough drafts of these assignments for mathematical and grammatical correctness and returned them to the students. They were to edit their rough drafts and turn in final drafts, along with their rough drafts. I compared each final draft with the rough draft and awarded points based on the rubric. Samples of the rubrics I used appear on the next page.

I have been very pleased with the quality of work that my students have produced. These assignments have given students who may not be the best mathematicians a chance to express themselves in a different form. As you will see in the following excerpts from selected student papers, students seemed to welcome the opportunity to take a creative approach to problem solving, had fun with the exercises, and felt free to write in a personal voice not often expressed in a mathematics classroom.

Voyager *Travels to Uranus*

On January 24, 1986, I, *Voyager* 2, hoped to gather information which would bring us closer to completing the puzzle of our solar system. On this day, I came within 81,560 kilometers (50,679 miles) of Uranus, the seventh planet from the sun. That is about three billion kilometers (1.9 billion miles) from Earth.

One major question scientists had about Uranus's atmosphere, which is 75 percent hydrogen gas, about 25 percent helium gas and has small amounts of methane gas, was whether or not it had any clouds. Clues about "wind velocity" and "atmospheric circulation patterns" could be obtained through them. As I sped closer to Uranus, images being sent back to Earth showed faint patterns in the planet's atmosphere. These pictures were of clouds organized in bands parallel with the equator; around the South Pole the clouds formed concentric circles. Scientists explain these patterns as the differences in the depths of the clouds and the way sunlight breaks down methane gas to form hazes. By measuring the positions of individual clouds, scientists could estimate the rotation rate of Uranus's atmosphere. They were able to deduce that Uranus has powerful east-west winds that reach maximum velocities of about 650 kilometers (400 miles) per hour.

(Rachel Gilgoff, September 21, 1989)

A Parabolic Punt

It's 3rd and 10; I'm thrown and dropped, so the play is ruled as an incompletion. Now that it is 4th and 10, obviously I must be punted. From around the 28-yard line (one of my x-coordinates), I am hiked by Jason Garrido and the warm hands of Eric Wallace caress my brown, muddy leather. Then, suddenly, I am dropped and I see it. It is a big white leather shoe headed right for my head. It is a perfectly executed kick. What a feeling, soaring through the air, with the cool winds jetting off my smooth leather. I feel an unmatchable and indescribable sensation in the air while I am cruising at 34.6 miles per hour. After about 15 more feet, I pass the 50-yard line at a height of 51 feet (the y-intercept). After about 15 more yards, the opposing team touches me, but loses control of me. There, at approximately the 45-yard line (another x-intercept), I lie untouched for a moment but am still

Algebra I

I Am an Integer

GRADING RUBRIC

Points will be awarded as follows for the integer story:

___ 1 point	Location on the number line and closest neighbors
___ 1 point	Examples of adding and subtracting integers
___ 1 point	Examples of multiplying and dividing integers
___ 1 point	Opposite integer and absolute value
___ 1 point	"Stranger" number examples
___ 1 point	Odd or even, positive or negative, or neither
___ 1 point	Point of view (of an integer)
___ 1 point	Rough draft completed on time
___ 1 point	Neat, attractive layout
___ 1 point	Correct spelling, sentence structure
___ 10 points	**Total**

Algebra II/Trigonometry

I Am a Parabola

GRADING RUBRIC

Points will be awarded as follows for the parabola story:

___ 1 point	Location at beginning
___ 1 point	Rate of motion
___ 1 point	Coordinates of vertex and three other points
___ 1 point	Passing through the vertex/changing directions
___ 1 point	Equation of the parabola
___ 1 point	Upward/downward and intercepts
___ 1 point	Point of view of a point on parabola
___ 1 point	Rough draft completed on time
___ 1 point	Neat, attractive layout
___ 1 point	Correct spelling, sentence structure
___ 10 points	**Total**

It would be helpful to include a separate sheet of paper showing any work done in finding the coordinates of the vertex, the x- or y-intercepts, and any other points on the parabola or in finding the equation of the parabola itself. Although not required, a graph would also be helpful and would make the paper more complete.

considered a live ball. Eric Mitchell sees the opportunity and grabs me; he picks me up and runs me all the way to the end zone for a 45-yard touchdown. I like a lot of things about my job, but I especially like when the crowd cheers for me. I don't seem to understand why only half of the stadium cheers at one time, though.

(Eric Narestrer, January 18, 1991)

Free Throw Probability

One day when I was playing basketball instead of doing my homework (which has happened more than once), I decided to combine the two activities and tried to make both basketball and homework fun (the latter almost is impossible to do and has not happened many times). After I had dominated the numerous games with Steve Horwitz, I took a ball and started to shoot free throws consecutively from the free throw line. While Steve was practicing his various Vlade Divac moves such as the 20-foot jumper, spinning reverse lay-up, and the ever-famous hook, I did something useful and attempted 100 shots making exactly 87 (yes, it was a normal basket, regulation ball, and regulation free throw distance! No, of course, it wasn't a fluke!), turning out to be 87 percent of the shots made. Keeping in mind that I was shooting better than the majority of the NBA, I tried another four, calculating that .87 was going to be good and .13 was not. The next three missed by way of an airball, a brick, and one that bounced off the rim. I was lucky that the fourth one missed so bad that it banked in, otherwise I would've been 0 for 4 instead of 25 percent being one of four.

Did this mean that I just stink and have no hope for basketball like Mark McNamara and others? Of course not! It just means that I stink in pressure situations, times when it counts the most (accounting for my not-up-to-par test scores). I started to get depressed and wondered if anyone else saw. Then, I saw Steve on the ground laughing hysterically. I guess he saw my last four shots! It was all right because I had been laughing at his abilities in the sport ever since we first met. Well, anyway, I sat down watching Steve miss shot after shot (and those were just the lay-ups), and determined that my percentage went down to 84.6 percent. First the Lakers, the best team in the history of basketball, lose in the second round of the 1990 NBA Playoffs to the stinking Phoenix Suns and now this! My life was almost over. The only thing left to live for was James Worthy (what a great first name!), the Laker Girls, and walking into my 5th period class and spending 55 precious minutes with my intelligent and dignified AlgII/Trig teacher, Mr. Isaacs. I took what was left of my dignity and tried to put back together a decent life, but it was difficult, especially with how my probability graph turned out (see pg. 4). I started to wonder which probability was more correct, 87 percent, 25 percent or 84.6 percent. I figured that one can't be judged by four lousy shots, so I happily threw that out. Then I realized that greats such as Magic Johnson, Larry Bird, and even Kevin Johnson (I really like this guy! What University of California school did he go to anyway?) don't just throw out their 0 for 7 days, even though they rarely happen, so I sadly threw out 87 percent as well. That left me with 84.6 percent, my true free throw percentage. Not bad for a sophomore who only competed for one season.

(James Tai, May 22, 1990)

Most of my students have told me that they enjoy the writing assignments, although there are still those who say, "This isn't an English class." Of course, they also say that when I tell them that spelling counts on my tests, just as it does on tests in other classes. The writing assignments, along with the journals or learning logs that my students also keep, have given me a more complete picture of my students' abilities and interests. All in all, assigning writing in my mathematics classes, even with the extra reading required to grade the assignments and journals, has been well worth the effort.

Showing, Not Telling

A Training Program for Student Writers

By Rebekah Caplan
Coordinator, English/Language Arts (Kindergarten Through Grade Twelve),
Oakland Unified School District;
and Teacher/Consultant, Bay Area Writing Project

Year after year we make student writers cringe with the reminder to be specific. We write in margins next to bracketed passages: *Explain, describe.* We extend arrows over words and under words, we circle words, we draw lines through words, and we accompany our hieroglyphics with captions: "What do you mean? Needs more detail; unclear." When we compose essay questions for examinations, we underline the why or why not at the end of the question twice so that our students will realize the importance of that part of the response. Recently, I talked with one teacher who had designed a rubber stamp which bore the words, GIVE AN EXAMPLE, so that he would not have to scribble the phrase again and again.

The assumption behind the Showing, *not* Telling, Training Program is that most students have not been trained to show what they mean. By training, I do not mean the occasional exercises taken from composition textbooks, nor do I mean the experience gained by writing perhaps eight major essays over the course of a year. What I mean by training is the performing of a constant mental warm-up, short and rigorous, which is not unlike the training routines of musicians, dancers, and athletes. Several years ago, while teaching reading and composition in a suburban middle school, I realized the important connection between disciplined practice in the arts and the need

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EDITOR'S NOTE: This article is an excerpt from a monograph entitled *Showing Writing: A Training Program to Help Students Be Specific.* Coauthored by Rebekah Caplan and Catherine Keech and reprinted here by permission of the Bay Area Writing Project, 615 University Hall, Room 1040, University of California, Berkeley, CA 94720-1040. See also *Writers in Training: A Guide to Developing a Composition Program*, by Rebekah Caplan. Published by Dale Seymour Publications, P.O. Box 10888, Palo Alto, CA 94303.

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The difference between the right word and the almost right word is the difference between lightning and the lightning bug.

MARK TWAIN

for it in a writing program. My first students were eighth graders, and not knowing precisely what the junior high school student needed to learn about writing, I experimented for a while.

My Experiment with Eighth Grade Students

For approximately three weeks I assigned my eighth grade students a potpourri of writing exercises and examined their papers carefully for common problems or strengths. I wanted to determine what my students already knew about good writing and how far I might expect to take them. It was not difficult to discover in those first few weeks of my teaching career that although these eighth graders did write with enthusiasm and energy, not many of them wrote with color or sound or texture. In a description of a student's favorite movie, I would read: "It was fantastic because it was so real!" Or the description of a strange person: "He is so weird." Or a description of a friend: "She has the most fantastic personality."

The underlinings proved the earnestness of the students, their sincerity. I attacked these empty descriptions, however, and inscribed in the margins those same suggestions that teachers have used for years. In class I passed out models of rich description—character sketches by John Steinbeck, settings by Mark Twain, abstract ideas by Ray Bradbury. I advised the students, as they scanned the models and glanced back at their own papers, that they needed to be that explicit, that good. That is what writing is all about. I said, "I know that you know what makes a thunderstorm so frightening. I know that you know the same things Mark Twain knew about a thunderstorm. Now what details did he use?" And we would list "the trees swaying" and the sky turning "blue-black" until we had every descriptive word classified on the chalkboard. "And now," I continued, "you describe a beautiful sunset in the same way that Mark Twain described the storm."

The writings from such follow-up assignments were admittedly better; but without the prepping, without fussing and reminding, I could not get students to remember to use specifics naturally. With growing frustration I tried to examine my history as a student writer. I wanted to track down what it had been like for me to write in the eighth grade and what it was like for my students today. I wanted to uncover when it was that I had reached a turning point or gained a sense of discovery about language and expression.

When I tried to recall my own junior high experience, however, I could not remember one assignment, let alone any instruction in writing. What I did remember was signing autograph books and passing notes in class, recording memories in diaries, and signing *slam* books. Those sorts of writings mattered the most. We cared deeply about who was one's friend and who was one's enemy, who was loved, who was hated, who was worthy of secrets, who was not. And as these issues came under judgment, we based our verdict on the degree of someone's good personality. In fact, the supreme compliment paid a friend in an autograph book amounted to "fantastic personality." And it is still so today.

The memory struck me as being significant. The notion that each person has a personality that is separate from looks or dress or wealth is a new thought to the junior high school student. I remember using the same phrase, "a great personality," with fresh, original intentions in diaries and school papers. My friends and I were intrigued by the idea of personality more than any other idea. We were fascinated by people's differences; yet, we could not say exactly what made us like one person and dislike another. Could it be, then, that I was demanding writing that my students were not ready to produce? It seemed crucial to respect their excitement over many of these clichéd discoveries. I had to allow room for naive, exploratory generalizations but, at the same time, challenge them to move beyond simple abstractions and discover what concepts, like personality, were based on—how they derived their meanings from concrete perceptions.

An Examination of My Writing

After examining what motivated my students, I looked at myself as an adult writer. What kinds of things did I strive for? I surely strove for specificity. For years I had kept a journal in which I commented on cycles of personal change. I usually began in a stream-of-consciousness style, listing sensations and noting the details that would explain my perceptions to myself. I wrote often, even if I had nothing to say, in the hope that I would discover something to write about. I believe this ritual of writing regularly developed from my training as a dancer and a pianist. As a young piano student, I practiced daily finger exercises to strengthen manual agility at the keyboard to prepare myself for a Bach concerto. As a young ballerina, I was forced to do leg lifts at the bar for 30 minutes for each lesson; the remaining 15 minutes were devoted to dancing. (How we longed for it to be the other way around!) I notice that beginning artists practice drawing the human body again and again from varying angles, using different materials—charcoals, oils, ink— to capture reality. In the drama classes I attended in college, we began acting lessons with short improvisations that allowed us to experiment with emotions before we rehearsed major scenes for a performance. In all these cases, the learning, the mastering, came more from the practice than from the final presentation.

My Training Program for Student Writers

After drawing these several conclusions about the training of artists, I decided to build into my curriculum a training program for student writers—a program in which I attempted to engrain craft and to make the use of specific detail automatic, habitual, through regular and rigorous practice. I created a writing program that included these coordinating tasks:

1. Practicing two to three times a week the expanding of a general statement into a paragraph
2. Applying the difference between *telling* and *showing* in the revision process
3. Practicing specific ways to select and arrange concrete details in developing an idea or structuring an essay

Next, I will describe the initial phase of my training program.

Since students need the discipline of a regular routine to reinforce the use of concrete details in place of, or in support of, their generalizations, I assign a regular homework challenge: I give them what I call a *telling sentence.* They must expand the thought in that sentence into an entire paragraph which shows rather than tells. They take home sentences like these:

> The room is vacant.
> The jigsaw puzzle was difficult to assemble.
> Lunch period is too short.

They bring back descriptive paragraphs—short or long, but always detailed, and focused on demonstrating the thought expressed in the assigned telling sentence. I challenge students not to use the original statement in the paragraph at all. I ask them to convince me that a room is empty or a puzzle is hard to assemble without once making that claim directly. The challenge is much like one in charades: They have to get an idea across without telling what it is.

To establish the difference between telling and showing, I distribute the following two paragraphs to my students. The first was written by a seventh grader; the second, by novelist E. L. Doctorow. Both passages concern a scene at a bus stop:

> **Telling:**
>
> Each morning I ride the bus to school. I wait along with the other people who ride my bus. Sometimes

The chief purpose of words is to convey thoughts, and unless the wavelengths of the words are right, the receiving apparatus will utterly fail to pick up the thoughts.

GEORGE OTIS SMITH

the bus is late and we get angry. Some guys start fights and stuff just to have something to do. I'm always glad when the bus finally comes.

Showing:

A bus arrived. It discharged its passengers, closed its doors with a hiss, and disappeared over the crest of the hill. Not one of the people waiting at the bus stop had attempted to board. One woman wore a sweater that was too small, a long loose skirt, white sweater socks, and house slippers. One man was in his undershirt. Another man wore shoes with the toes cut out, a soiled blue serge jacket and brown pants. There was something wrong with these people. They made faces. A mouth smiled at nothing, and unsmiled, smiled and unsmiled. A head shook in vehement denial. Most of them carried brown paper bags rolled tight against their stomachs.[1]

When asked to distinguish the differences between the two paragraphs, most students respond by saying the second paragraph is better because they can picture the scene more easily. They think the people in paragraph two are "weird, poor, and lonely, " (all *telling* ideas). But this interpretation comes from the pictures (the students' word), pictures of people wearing torn clothing, carrying brown paper bags instead of lunch boxes, and wearing unhappy expressions on their faces. Student writers can easily discern good description. Getting them to write with close detail is not managed as smoothly.

I remind students that the storybooks they read as very young children are filled with colorful illustrations that show the events described on accompanying pages; the writer does not have to describe the lovely red barn with the carved wooden trim, for the picture next to the caption, "The barn was beautiful," reveals that idea. However, in more mature literature, drawings disappear from the pages, and the writer assumes the role of illustrator. Language must be the author's brush and palette. Following such a discussion, I initiate the telling training exercise and explain to students that they will expand one sentence from two to three times a week from telling to showing during the entire course of the semester.

Listed next are sample telling sentences. These sentences are given in no particular order and are not necessarily linked by recurring themes. Sometimes students themselves suggest sentences for successive assignments. By choosing generalizations familiar to students, I increase the likelihood of effective elaboration:

I was pleasantly surprised.
The speaker got our attention.
The pizza tasted good.
The game was a close one.
Saturday is different from Sunday.
Teenagers should have their own telephones.
The jocks think they're cool.
They act older than their age.
Time passed.
Reality set in.

The idea of frequent writing is, of course, nothing new in itself. I know many teachers who have their students "write for ten minutes" the moment they come to class. My writing approach, however, is different in a number of ways. First, many teachers assign topics for elaboration, such as school or family or sports. Although a topic is open-ended and allows more room for creativity, students often spend more time trying to find something to say than they spend in writing the composition. The type of statement I use is similar to the thesis, the controlling sentence of an essay. The generalization supplies the point; the student is given the idea to support. Students are free then to concentrate on experimenting with expressions of that idea. Further, since they are all working on the same idea, they are in a position to compare results—to learn from one another's crafting.

Another departure from other writing warm-ups is that this writing is done at home. Students must come to class with pieces finished and ready to be evaluated. We do not wait ten minutes while they hastily scribble some sort of solution. I want to give them time—if they will use it—to experiment with and think about what they are trying to do.

Importance of Sharing the Writing

Finally, unlike private journals or some free-writing assignments, the exercises are written to be shared. I use the writings in much the same way that a drama instructor uses improvisation as an instructional technique. The daily sentence expansion becomes a framework for practicing and discovering ways of showing ideas. Just as drama

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[1] E. L. Doctorow, *The Book of Daniel*. New York: Random House, Inc., © 1971, p. 5. Used by permission of the publisher.

In more mature literature, drawings disappear from the pages, and the writer assumes the role of illustrator. Language must be the author's brush and palette.

REBEKAH CAPLAN

students search for ways of expressing ambition or despair by imagining themselves in real-life situations that would evoke these feelings and discovering ranges of bodily and facial expression, my students arrive at ways of showing "empty rooms" or "difficult puzzles" by experimenting with different kinds of language expression. I instruct them very little, preferring that students find their own solutions. But, finally, although the experimenting at home is free, not judged, the practice includes an important element that parallels instruction in acting: the daily public performance. The students know in advance that some papers will be read to the class for analysis and evaluation. However, they do not know which ones. As their papers might be among those I choose (my selections do not fall into a predictable pattern), the students are likely to be prepared.

The *performance* or sharing of improvisational or experimental efforts is an important learning experience for the selected performers and their audience. The first ten minutes of every class session, then, is devoted to oral reading, not writing. I choose between five and seven writing samples, which I read aloud to the class, and as a group we evaluate the density of detail. Where did this writer have success with interesting description? Where were his or her details thin? This is the only time I do not comb the papers for errors in grammar, spelling, and usage, for there is not time. Since we respond exclusively to content, students can give full attention to being specific without the pressure of being grammatically perfect.

I grade each paper immediately as the discussion of that paper concludes. Besides assigning an A, B, or C grade, I quickly write a specific comment made by the group, urging students away from saying only "good showing" about the specific section that was evidence of good showing: "You show great tension through the expression in his eyes"; "Your verb *conjectured* gives sophistication to his speech." After we respond in this manner, I move on to the next reading. I record a check in my gradebook for those papers not selected for reading. If students do not turn in writings, they do not receive credit. All papers are recorded and handed back before the end of the period, giving the students immediate responses and recognition for their work. At the end of the semester, I average the number of grades a student has earned in the series of assignments.

Advantages to Using a Training Exercise

There are five major advantages to using such a daily training exercise with its follow-up sharing and discussion:

1. *Students write almost every other day.* I do not, however, assign sentences on the eve of an examination day, on days major assignments are due, or on holidays.
2. *I am freed from having to grade an entire set of papers each night, yet I provide an immediate evaluation.* If a student is disappointed because a particular writing was not selected, I invite him or her to share it with me after class. Generally, a student wants to share when he or she has written a good paragraph and wants me to enter a grade for this particular one, which I am glad to do. Sharing may also occur when a student is unsure of his or her solution and wants help.
3. *Students who are selected to perform hear useful comments immediately.* They do not have to wait a week to receive responses and constructive criticisms. The other students learn from the process of specifying weaknesses as

well as strengths of work and from hearing suggestions given to the performing students by peers and teachers.

4. *Students learn new developmental techniques and linguistic patterns from each other.* Students assimilate new ideas for specificity by regularly hearing other students' writing. In addition, they often internalize the linguistic patterns of other students either consciously or unconsciously. This process is similar to assimilating the speech patterns of a person with a different accent. After close association with this person, we may tune our speech to the inflections of an attractive or entertaining accent. I believe it is often easier for students to learn from other students who write well than from professional writers whose solutions may be out of the student's range.
5. *Students write for a specific audience.* They write with the expectation that classmates may hear their compositions the following day. Therefore, they usually put more effort into their writing than they would have given if the compositions were intended for their private journals or for a teacher's evaluation.

A selection of writing samples follows. Two students, a remedial freshman and a college-bound sophomore, show growth and change over a two-week time span. Their writings illustrate two important results of the training practice:

1. Students write more either because they are finding it easier to generate more writing or because they are working harder on the assignments (or both).
2. Students gain control over a wider range of techniques.

From the telling sentence, *The new students were lonely,* the freshman wrote the following at the beginning of the two-week time period:

> It was the first day of school and there were two new students, Dick and Dan, who had moved over the summer. They were brothers and this was a new city and school which they had come to, and in this school they would have to make friends because neither of them knew anybody or anyone.

As you will note, the freshman's writing is composed entirely of generalities (telling sentences). The writer explains the cause of the loneliness—a new city, new school, absence of old friends—but unless he shows us his new surroundings, unfamiliar faces, and different customs to support those reasons, he will do little to convince us. Perhaps if he could contrast "playing pool with the gang at Old Mike's Pizza Parlor" to the "eyes avoiding his unfamiliar face in the study hall," the reader might appreciate the realities of "new city, new school, new friends." Here is the same freshman student's writing two weeks later; the daily sentence was *The crossword puzzle was difficult to solve:*

> The sixth row down got me stuck. It was plain to tell that this crossword puzzle was rough. The puzzle, as it was, was made for a 12th grade level, and it made me feel as if I was in the 6th grade level. Intellectual words were included, such as "the square root" of 1,091,056 in four digits and others. The next one was a five-letter word for philodendron, which was "plant" to my surprise. I, as a normal person, had a very hard time trying to figure out what an Australian green citrus fruit was with four spaces. Instinctively I gave up the whole game, as it was too frustrating to cope with.

The freshman's selection illustrates his improvement in generating examples. The writer introduces his subject by *telling* that the puzzle was tough, but he immediately proves his claim with a series of illustrations: twelfth grade level versus sixth grade level, intellectual words like *square root,* unfamiliar plants and fruits that call for specialized knowledge. His writing is more enjoyable to read because of the examples he added. Notice also that his paragraph is longer, but he does not ramble or leave the point.

At the beginning of the two-week period, the sophomore responded to the daily sentence: *The room was vacant,* by writing this:

> The next show didn't start for another hour. As I repositioned the spotlight in the upper balcony, the squeaks of the rusty screws seemed to echo throughout the desolate building. I walked down the aluminum stairs that resounded with the sound of rain beating on a tin roof throughout the auditorium. I then opened the curtains to the large, lonely stage which looked dark and forbidding. As I put up the sets and decorated the stage, I guess it would seem to anyone walking in, that the room was very much

> alive with color and objects. But to me, even the set and decorated auditorium looked bare.

In the first half of the paragraph, this student carefully constructs detail. Like many students trying to master a skill, he concentrates intensely at first, very mindful of his task. However, there comes a point when, losing his fervor, he reverts to telling. With the sentence, "I then opened the curtains . . . ," he abandons his use of specifics, relying instead on vague adjectives like "dark and forbidding," or on general nouns such as "color and objects."

Within two weeks this student increased his observational skills considerably. In addition, he was able to sustain the use of vivid details throughout a much longer piece of writing. With the telling sentence, *The roller coaster was the scariest ride at the fair*, as a prompt, he wrote:

> As I stood in line, I gazed up at the gigantic steel tracks that looped around three times. The thunderous roar of the roller coaster sounded like a thunder cloud that had sunk into my ears and suddenly exploded. The wild screams of terror shot through me like a bolt of lightning and made my fingers tingle with fear. Soon I heard the roar of the roller coaster cease. As the line started to move forward, I heard the clicking of the turnstile move closer and closer. Finally, I got onto the loading deck and with a shaking hand gave the attendant my ticket.

I don't start a novel or a play saying, "I'll write about such and such." I start with an idea and then find out what I'm writing about.

WILLIAM INGE

> It seemed like I barely got seated when I felt a jolt which signified the beginning of the ride. While the roller coaster edged up the large track, I kept pulling my seatbelt tighter and tighter until it felt like I was cutting off all circulation from the waist down. At the crest of the hill, I caught a glimpse of the quiet town which lay before me and gave me a feeling of peace and serenity. Suddenly my eyes felt like they were pushed all the way back into my head, and the town had become a blur. All I could see was a mass of steel curving this way and that as the roller coaster turned upside down. I was squeezing the safety bar so tight that my fingers seemed to be embedded in the metal. I could see the landing deck, and I let out a deep breath that had been held inside ever since the first drop. As the roller coaster came to a halt, I felt weak and emotionally drained. When I stepped off onto the deck, I teetered a bit to the left, but caught my balance quickly when I saw my friends waiting for me at the exit gate. I tried to look "normal," while trying to convince them in a weak voice that, "Oh, it was nothing."

Even though he makes general claims—"I felt weak and emotionally drained"—he remembers to support his feeling with specific evidence: "When I stepped off onto the deck, I teetered a bit to the left. . . ." Or, as he tries to look "normal," he proves this with dialogue: "Oh, it was nothing." This student puts himself in the experience every step of the narration. Two weeks earlier, he could not sustain such a practice.

To summarize, the practice of showing, not telling, through regular sentence expansions provides a framework in which students can experiment and discover ways of showing ideas. It is a time for self-exploration in the attempt to attach meaning to experience; it is also a time for increasing fluency and creating a style and voice.

Practical Ideas for Training Students to Show, Not Tell

Showing, Not Telling: Setting, Characterization, Conflict

By Laurie Opfell
Former English Teacher, Irvine High School;
and Teacher/Consultant, UCI Writing Project

After having my students read short stories in an Introduction to Literature class, I decided to ask them to work in pairs to create their own short stories in which they would describe a setting, establish a character, and develop a conflict. My experience with average student writing had led me to expect that the results of this "story" assignment would prove to be the usual fare—somewhat general and flat. Students seemed to have no problems telling a story, but they lacked the ability to add enough details to make the story vivid and exciting. Not surprisingly, the papers that were turned in conformed to my preconceived notions.

After hearing Rebekah Caplan speak at the UCI Writing Project Summer Institute, it struck me that that was exactly what my students were doing—telling a story, not showing or revealing the characters, conflicts, and setting that went with it. I decided that I would have to work *showing, not telling,* into narrative writing the next time my Introduction to Literature class was offered.

At my next opportunity, I told the students that we were going to create the beginning of a short story in several stages:

In step 1, they would create a description of a setting.

In step 2, they would create and describe two major characters.

In step 3, they would write a dialogue between the two characters that would reveal a conflict.

In step 4, they would combine setting, characters, conflict, and dialogue to create the beginning of a short story.

The following are examples of how I worked showing, not telling, into this assignment. In each case, I first give the students a literary model and then a series of directions for creating their own *showing* writing.

- *First Example:* In this section from *Great Expectations,* Charles Dickens could have *told* his readers that this room was full of decay and death. Instead, he *shows* it by writing this:

> From that room, too, the daylight was completely excluded, and it had an airless smell that was oppressive. A fire had been lately kindled in the damp old-fashioned grate, and it was more disposed to go out than to burn up, and the reluctant smoke which hung in the room seemed colder than the clearer air—like our own marsh mist. Certain wintry branches of candles on the high chimneypiece faintly lighted the chamber; or, it would be more expressive to say, faintly troubled its darkness. It was spacious, and I dare say had once been handsome, but every discernible thing in it was covered with dust and mould, and dropping to pieces. The most prominent object was a long table with a tablecloth spread on it, as if a feast had been in preparation when the house and the clocks all stopped together. An epergne or centre-piece of some kind was in the middle of this cloth; it was so heavily overhung with cobwebs that its form was quite undistinguishable; and, as I looked along the yellow expanse out of which I remember its seeming to grow, like a black fungus, I saw speckled-legged spiders with blotchy bodies running home to it, and running out from it, as if some circumstance of the greatest public importance had just transpired in the spider community.

Step 1A *Your assignment:* Look over the list of *telling* titles below and select one (or write one of your own):

The park was deserted.
The room was haunted.
The lot was full of trash.
The beach was peaceful.
The garage was a mess.
The street was crowded.

Objective: Write a one-half to three-fourths page description that vividly *shows* the place the title mentions. Include time of day, colors, mood (emotions drawn out by place), objects in place, smells, temperature, lighting, and sounds.

Step 1B Now, write a setting description for your story. Give it a *telling* title; then *show* it using colors, description of objects, mood, and so forth as you did in the preceding assignment. Use the excerpt from *Great Expectations* as a model.

- *Second Example:* In this section of *The Red Pony,* John Steinbeck could have just *told* his readers that this character was a ranch hand and left it at that. Instead, he makes it obvious by including specific details:

> At daybreak Billy Buck emerged from the bunkhouse and stood for a moment on the porch looking up at the sky. He was a broad, bandy-legged little man with a walrus mustache, with square hands, puffed and muscled on the palms. His eyes were a contemplative, watery gray and the hair which protruded from under his Stetson hat was spiky and weathered. Billy was still stuffing his shirt into his blue jeans as he stood on the porch. He unbuckled his belt and tightened it again. The belt showed, by the worn shiny places opposite each hole, the gradual increase of Billy's middle over a period of years. When he had seen to the weather, Billy cleared each nostril by holding its mate closed with his forefinger and blowing fiercely. Then he walked down to the barn, rubbing his hands together.[1]

Step 2A *Your assignment:* Look over the following list of *telling* titles and select one:

He was a spy.
She was an unfriendly nurse.
The man looked old.
The tired girl lay on the couch.
He was a snob.
The lonely man walked away.
He was a construction worker.
The irritated executive shuffled papers.

Objective: Write a one-half to three-fourths page description that vividly *shows* the type of character the title describes. Include type/color of *hair, body parts* (hands, legs, and so forth), *facial features* (eyes, mouth, nose), *an attitude* about life, several articles of clothing described in detail, and an *action.*

Step 2B Now, create two characters for your story and describe them carefully. Give your characters *telling* titles; then show them as you did in the preceding assignment. (These characters will later be in conflict with one another.) Keep the way John Steinbeck reveals character in mind as you write.

- *Third Example:* In this section of "Cat in the Rain," Ernest Hemingway uses a dialogue between a man and his wife to reveal the conflicts in their relationship and to show the woman's attitudes about herself and their lifestyle. Although the author never says directly that George is insensitive or that his wife is lonely and frustrated, it becomes obvious through their conversation.

When the story opens, the couple are staying in an Italian hotel. While looking out the window, the woman notices a cat outside trying to keep out of the rain. After an unsuccessful attempt at going down to rescue it, she returns to their room:

> George was reading again.
>
> She went over and sat in front of the mirror of the dressing table looking at herself with the hand glass. She studied her profile, first one side and then the other. Then she studied the back of her head and her neck.
>
> "Don't you think it would be a good idea if I let my hair grow out?" she asked, looking at her profile again.
>
> George looked up and saw the back of her neck, clipped close like a boy's.
>
> "I like it the way it is."
>
> "I get so tired of it," she said. "I get so tired of looking like a boy."
>
> George shifted his position in the bed. He hadn't looked away from her since she started to speak.
>
> "You look pretty darn nice," he said.

---

[1] From *The Red Pony* by John Steinbeck. Copyright 1933, 1937, 1938, by John Steinbeck. Copyright renewed 1961, 1965, 1966, by John Steinbeck. Reprinted by permission of Viking Penguin, a division of Penguin Books USA, Inc.

> She laid the mirror down on the dresser and went over to the window and looked out. It was getting dark.
>
> "I want to pull my hair back tight and smooth and make a big knot at the back that I can feel," she said. "I want to have a kitty to sit on my lap and purr when I stroke her."
>
> "Yeah?" George said from the bed.
>
> "And I want to eat at a table with my own silver and I want candles. And I want it to be spring and I want to brush my hair out in front of a mirror and I want a kitty and I want some new clothes."
>
> "Oh, shut up and get something to read," George said. He was reading again.
>
> His wife was looking out of the window. It was quite dark now and still raining in the palm trees.
>
> "Anyway, I want a cat," she said. "I want a cat. I want a cat now. If I can't have long hair or any fun, I can have a cat."
>
> George was not listening. He was reading his book.[2]

Step 3A *Your assignment:* Look over the list of *telling* titles and select one:

The brother hated his sister.
The girl's rudeness angered the teacher.
The sight of Harry caused Dave to panic.
The strange behavior of the son worried the parent.
The scorn of the senior offended the freshman.
The jock's arrogance frustrated the coach.

Objective: Write a page of dialogue in the form of a conversation between any of the pairs listed above. Although each pair already has a conflict, it will be up to you to reveal it through what they say. In addition, you will want to decide how the characters will show their attitudes toward each other. For example, if you use the brother who hated his sister, his hostility could be revealed through sarcasm, insincere comments, or insults. The sister's attitudes will also need to be revealed. Her responses to him might take the form of surprise, rudeness, or ridicule. Include brief setting information, if necessary, the tone of voice that words are stated in, and words emphasized that will point out emotions.

Step 3B Now, write a dialogue between the two characters you already created for your own story. Reveal their conflict without actually saying what the conflict is; let the reader infer it. Also show the attitudes the characters have toward one another. Give your dialogue a *telling* title.

Step 4 Finally, combine your setting, characters, and their conflict in a three-page beginning of a short story. Introduce the conflict early, because this will be the hook that captures the reader's interest. Be sure that you use ample detail to *show* rather than *tell* what your story is about.

The students wrote their narratives in stages. A writing group edited the rough drafts that had been written in Step 4, and then the students turned in their final drafts and all the prewriting exercises. I found that my students' writing had improved dramatically because of the exposure to showing, not telling. The student writers included far more details and descriptions than I had found in their stories in the past. By revealing or showing the conflict, my students developed a sophistication in their writing that I had never seen before. We read the stories aloud, and an animated class discussion ensued because we inferred and interpreted what the authors wished to reveal through their showing. I also found that working in pairs helped the students make their papers more humorous, creative, and free of errors because the "audience factor" was built in. Showing, not telling, enabled me to raise my expectations, because I learned that if I provide my students with models, training, practice, and feedback, they can attain whatever objectives are set for them.

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[2] Ernest Hemingway. Excerpted from "Cat in the Rain," in the *Short Stories of Ernest Hemingway*. Copyright 1925 by Charles Scribner's Sons. Copyright renewed 1953 by Ernest Hemingway. Used by permission of Scribner, a Division of Simon & Schuster Inc. Copyright Hemingway Foreign Rights Trust. All rights outside U.S. Hemingway Foreign Rights Trust, by a deed of trust of Mary Hemingway 16 March 1962 as widow and sole legatee of the author.

Integrating Clustering and Showing, Not Telling

By Carol Booth Olson
Director, UCI Writing Project

I have had good luck with using clustering as a way to introduce and generate ideas about a concept, character, event, or experience and showing, not telling, as an organizational device for logically developing and supporting those ideas in well-detailed, descriptive paragraphs. In a sense, clustering becomes a prewriting activity that culminates in a showing, not telling, writing assignment.

Provided below is an experiential exercise I use to help students enhance descriptive writing skills. The exercise is based on the integration of clustering and showing, not telling.

Lesson Plan for Clustering and Showing, Not Telling, About Blindness

Provide an introduction to descriptive writing prior to this exercise. Activities can include:

- Lecture/discussion on concrete versus abstract diction
- Examination of professional and student models to discover what makes writing vivid
- Presentation of color slides that students respond to with "I see," "I hear," "I smell," "I taste," and "I feel" statements
- Visualization to music

The activities above focus primarily on the visual in descriptive writing. The following exercise enables students to tap their other senses.

Step 1: Orientation

Ask each student in the class to pick a partner. Explain that every class member will have an opportunity to experience blindness as well as to become a guide for a blind person. As you are passing out one blindfold to each pair, ask the students to choose which role—guide or blind person—they prefer to assume first. Once the students have selected their respective roles, the guide should assist his or her partner in putting on the blindfold.

It is the guide's responsibility to lead the blind person out of the classroom and to provide him or her with a sensory experience, which should involve exposure to some or all of the following: smell, texture, taste, the experience of ascending and descending, the feeling of an open space versus a closed-in space, and changing temperatures. No conversation should take place during this excursion. However, students can communicate through body language. After approximately five to ten minutes, the students should stop, switch roles, and continue their walk.

Step 2: Prewriting Exercise

When the students return to the classroom, print the word BLIND on the chalkboard. Ask the students to put this word in the center of a blank piece of paper and cluster in a circle around the stimulus word (in single words and short phrases) all of the images, associations, and feelings that come to mind when they think of being blind. After about five minutes, ask each person to share orally one of his or her cluster words or phrases. As the students volunteer their thoughts, you can ask other students whether they identify with the feelings expressed or whether they have different reactions to add. Record all of these responses in a composite cluster on the board, as shown in Figure 1.

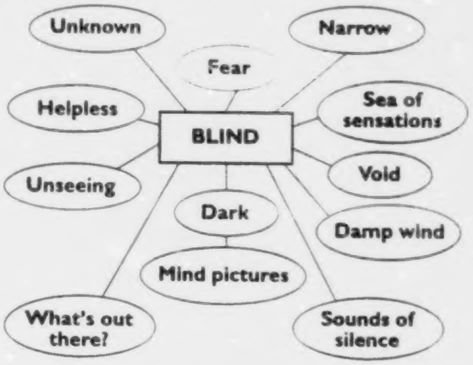

Fig. 1. Clustering of Images and Feelings of Being Blind

Step 3: Writing

After the clustering and discussion period, elicit one main idea or feeling about blindness that the group seemed to share. Then create a telling sentence (a general, declarative statement) which expresses that idea in a specific context students can illustrate. For example, if the predominant class response to the sensation of blindness was fear of the unknown, you might write a sentence like this on the chalkboard: "The blind woman was terrified of unfamiliar places." Draw the students' attention to this sentence. Ask them if they were to write a paragraph showing a blind woman who was terrified of unfamiliar places, what details would they use to:

1. Indicate that the woman was blind.
2. Make it clear that she was in an unfamiliar place.
3. Let the reader know how frightened she was.

Once they have discussed various ways to describe the telling sentence, ask the students to write one or more paragraphs that show how it feels to be a blind person in an unfamiliar place. They can use "The blind woman was terrified of unfamiliar places" as their topic sentence, but encourage them to illustrate this sentence through vivid, sensory details. Allow 20 to 30 minutes for writing.

Step 4: Sharing and Rewriting

Explain to the students that if they have written a vivid, well-detailed descriptive paragraph, they should no longer need their topic sentence. Without the topic sentence, the supporting paragraph should communicate effectively that the blind woman was terrified of unfamiliar places. Ask students to cross out their topic sentence and exchange papers with a friend. Working together, the two should answer the following questions: Does the paragraph communicate the message effectively without the topic sentence? In other words, can it stand alone? If not, what descriptive phrases and sensory details are necessary to show that the blind woman was terrified of unfamiliar places? Provide the class with at least one model of a well-written paper that is rich in showing writing.

Here is an example:

Telling sentence:

The blind woman was terrified of unfamiliar places.

Showing paragraphs:

She cautiously hobbled down the street, her white cane carefully tapping out the steps before her, sensing the ridges and rhythms of each concrete square. She could hear the blaring of midday traffic and the cursing of angry cab drivers and feel the crushing weight of the sound reverberating off tall buildings. Each step was an effort—a venture into the unknown. When would it end? A feeling of nausea welled up in her stomach, and beads of sweat appeared on her brow.

Suddenly, her cane missed a beat, and she stumbled off the curb. Car tires screeched in front of her and obscenities filled the air. An arm reached out to steady her. "Thank you," she mumbled as she collected herself and tried to blend back into the waiting crowd. Closing . . . it was all closing in. She could feel herself shrinking into the pavement.

"Pardon me, miss," a concerned voice said. "Can I help you across the street?"

Oh, dear, she thought, her chest beginning to tighten as she suppressed the sobs, all I need is for someone to be kind.

He could feel her stiffen as he gripped the back of her elbow and guided her across the street. When they reached the other side, she dismissed him with a "thank you" and appeared to be debating something. Curiously enough, she then reached for the walk button on the streetlight as if to head back in the direction she came from. From a block away, he caught a glimpse of her over her his shoulder. Statue-like, she was still standing exactly where he had left her—frozen in indecision.

Allow in-class time for rewriting and a second round of sharing with a partner. Have students polish and edit this draft so that it may be turned in for evaluation.

I like this particular assignment because it starts with a prewriting experience the students can draw on to write about. The clustering exercise that follows is a right-brain activity that helps students express their feelings and generate content. This logically leads into the showing, not telling, lesson where using concrete, sensory detail to create a picture and communicate emotions is stressed. Since descriptive writing is the most concrete writing domain and the easiest for most students to create, the lesson focuses on fluency—getting the language to say what the students mean. Later experiences, such as clustering and showing, not telling, about literary characters, will build a bridge from sensory/descriptive and imaginative/narrative into more analytical/expository writing.

Showing, Not Telling: A Stepping-Stone Toward Expository Writing

By Julie Simpson
English Teacher, Sunny Hills High School,
Fullerton Joint Union High School District;
and Teacher/Consultant, UCI Writing Project

In his office in the English Department at the University of California, Irvine, Owen Thomas had a Japanese watercolor of stepping-stones leading across a pond, and he was fond of pointing out that the writing process is analogous to that picture. In order to convey the intended message, a writer must carefully place his or her informational or symbolic stepping-stones to guide the reader to comprehend the meaning. The same can be said for the process of teaching writing: The teacher must provide a sequence of writing activities that bridge the different domains of writing.

I use Rebekah Caplan's idea of showing, not telling, as an initial stepping-stone from one writing mode to another and over to the path of exposition. With Harper Lee's novel *To Kill a Mockingbird* as the stimulus, I lead my freshman class from the *what* of description to the *how* of narration and toward the *why* of exposition. Along the way, we develop showing paragraphs into showing essays by means of telling sentences expanded into telling frames. All this is done as prewriting exercises that help students incorporate specific detail into expository writing. We begin by describing places and people, using models from *To Kill a Mockingbird*. In the novel Harper Lee writes wonderful showing descriptions:

> Of her setting—"Maycomb was an old town, but it was a tired old town when I first knew it." (p.11)
>
> Of Boo's rumored activities—"Inside the house lived a malevolent phantom." (p.15)
>
> Of Dill's appearance—"Dill was a curiosity." (p.13)
>
> Of Mrs. Dubose—"She was horrible." (p.115).[1]

We discuss what makes Harper Lee's descriptions so vivid and write our own parallel paragraphs from personal experiences. Here is student Juli Hara's description of a "curiosity":

> The child wore a pink checkered frock with white cuffs and collar. Her white knee socks dropped around her ankles, and her shiny black patent leather shoes reflected the Barbie lunch box in her right hand. Her pixie-like face was generously covered with copper freckles, and her bright eyes, framed by long blonde lashes, sparkled in the sunlight. Her long, flaxen hair was plaited into two thick braids that swung softly to and fro as the child twisted at the waist in a gesture of impatience.

When the students have achieved this kind of control, I move them to narration. We still use the book for inspiration; but now I create the telling sentences, and we include the telling statement as the opening of the paragraph.

Since writing about literature is more difficult than writing from experience, we tread carefully. I begin with narrative frames to help students see *how* to include the what of description in with the *how* of narration. For example:

Jem risked his life to avoid a lie. He had lost his pants when he and ________________.

Mr. Radley had seen them and ________________.

As they ran, ________________.

Jem knew he would be in trouble if ________________

So he lied and said ________________

Then, to avoid being caught in the lie, he had to ________________.

Scout tried to ________________

but ________________.

Late that night, Jem ________________.

From this explicit frame, we move to an expanded version:

Scout's innocence broke up the mob. (*Describe the scene at the jail.*) ________________

________________.

In the midst of this angry mob, Scout recognized Walter Cunningham's father. Wanting to break the silence, she tried to be polite. (*Summarize what she said, how the father reacted, and what the mob did.*) ________

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[1] Harper Lee. *To Kill a Mockingbird*. Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1960.

In order to convey the intended message, a writer must carefully place his or her informational or symbolic stepping-stones to guide the reader to comprehend the meaning.

JULIE SIMPSON

When the students begin to feel comfortable with the narrative step, we move into independent writing and frame summaries from the plot with personal experiences. "Scout learned there is a time and place for everything" asks students to recount the incident when Scout insulted young Walter Cunningham at the dinner table. To parallel that, we might use "I can remember learning the same thing." Another narrative-telling duo includes:

> "They never listen to my side." (*Tell about a time when you broke a rule for a perfectly good reason, but were not allowed to explain.*)
>
> *Paired with*
>
> "Uncle Jack wouldn't listen to Scout's side." (*Narrate the fight with Cousin Francis.*)

This kind of narration from telling sentences is just a skip away from the expository side of the pond. But to secure footage, we pause at a mid-step. We analyze the functions of the frames I have been writing for the class, as well as the function of a telling sentence. To the later narrations, we write our own frames. For instance, when we get to the trial section of Harper Lee's novel, I give this pair of starters: "Mayella falsely accused Tom Robinson of rape." "But Tom is innocent." To these shorter sentences, students merely narrate the separate versions of the crime. After they have written the two showing narrations, we begin to discuss why Mayella lies. In one of my classes, we came up with the following:

> Mayella is poor white trash. The only people beneath her and her family on the social scale are the blacks. Once, out of her extreme loneliness, Mayella makes a pass at Tom Robinson, a black man. When her father catches her and beats her, she has to make Tom look bad.

We place this paragraph at the beginning of two other good student *showing* paragraphs and read it as a whole essay:[2]

> Mayella is poor white trash. The only people beneath her and her family on the social scale are the blacks. Once, out of her extreme loneliness, Mayella makes a pass at Tom Robinson, a black man. When her father catches her and beats her, she has to make Tom look bad.
>
> Mayella accuses Tom of rape. Wanting to support her father's testimony, she tells the jury her story of what happened. Mayella had asked Tom inside the fence to chop up an old chifforobe for kindling. When she went inside the house to get his nickel pay, he followed her. As she turned around, he was on her. He got her around the neck, beat her, and left marks and bruises on her right side. "He caught me and choked me and took advantage of me," Mayella testifies in a flood of tears. Even though she says she passed out for a while, she remembers that she "fought him tooth and nail." Atticus shows Mayella that Tom is crippled in his left arm and could not have attacked her, but she continues her story. She says she ducked his right-fisted blow. "It glanced, that's what it did." And when Atticus asks her if she had not screamed until she had seen her father in the window, she still maintains Tom's guilt. He "took advantage of me an' if you . . . don't wanta do nothin' about it, then you're all yellow stinkin' cowards, stinkin' cowards, the lot of you."
>
> But Tom is clearly innocent. His story is that he has been doing chores for Miss Mayella for over a year, "choppin' kindlin', totin' water for her." She often called him into the yard to help her. On the evening in question, Miss Mayella had asked him into the house to fix a door that was off its hinges. But when he went inside, the door was fine. And Tom noticed

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[2] *AUTHOR'S NOTE:* The first paragraph was written by Laura Turner, and the second, by Jonathan Reinstein.

that none of the seven brothers and sisters were around. As she shut the door behind them, Mayella asked him to reach a box down from a cupboard. He stood on a chair to reach. In the process, Miss Mayella grabbed him around the legs and scared him so that he turned the chair over as he hopped down. Then she hugged him, kissed him, and demanded that he kiss her back. Tom resisted without being harmful to Mayella, and ran away before he could be dealt with by Mr. Ewell, who had appeared at the window. Even though he had done nothing wrong, Tom was scared. "It weren't safe for any nigger to be in a fix like that." He was "scared I'd hafta face up to what I didn't do."

After reviewing what we had developed, we decided that the account clearly needed a conclusion; so we created a brief, closing paragraph:

> Unfortunately, in the racist community of Maycomb, all the facts in the world wouldn't allow a jury to support a black man against a white woman. So innocent Tom is found guilty.

By creating their own frame for their showing writing, the students have stepped onto the path of expository writing. We discuss again how description shows *what*, narration explains *how*, and exposition interprets *why*. The process of expository writing requires the use of the showing writing to explain and back it up.

The final assignment is designed to reinforce the students' awareness of the expository form. In the assignment, the students choose between two tasks. They examine either Harper Lee's definition of courage or her explanation of why it is a sin to kill a mockingbird. They write their own frame, beginning with her idea as the main (thesis) telling statement, and add supporting telling sentences for each person they will discuss in the paper (e.g., three mockingbirds or three degrees of courage). By adding a showing narrative summary of episodes to their supporting statements, they create with their first full essay, an essay that integrates descriptive, narrative, and expository writing and that shows as well as tells.

Writing About Literature with Showing, Not Telling

By William Burns

English Teacher, Sonora High School,
Fullerton Joint Union High School District;
and Teacher/Consultant, UCI Writing Project

One of the strengths of a great idea is its ability to be applied in a variety of conditions, to meet different needs, and to solve a problem in different environments. Rebekah Caplan's articulate and practical application of showing, not telling, to teaching writing is one of those great ideas. It works with elementary, middle school, high school, and college students. It works in all of the domains: sensory/descriptive, imaginative/narrative, practical/informative, and analytical/expository. After hearing Rebekah's presentation at the University of California, Irvine's (UCI) Summer Writing Project, I knew I had been given a powerful tool. But at that time, I did not recognize just how powerful and versatile this idea could be.

As the new school year started, I was eager and ready, armed with a myriad of writing strategies. My students would learn to be explicit, specific, and concrete, giving details and examples wherever necessary. I used some of Rebekah's sample sentences, found others from the students' own writing, and made up my own. Students began to use more and more specific details to expand the rather lifeless opening sentences I gave them: "My sister is a brat"; "Math is hard (*or* easy)"; "The sand at the beach felt good."

After a while, they asked whether they could move the sentences to other places in the paragraphs. "Yes," I said. Then I asked them whether they knew what else these sentences might be called. And as I had hoped, one student said they were like "topic sentences."

I used to give several lessons about what topic sentences were and what they did; and now, without any such contrivances of mine, they knew what a topic sentence did and that it could be moved around in a paragraph. It was not too long afterwards that a student complained about the "dull, boring" sentences she had been given and

Devise, wit; write, pen; for I am for whole volumes in folio.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

asked whether she could omit the telling sentence. "It messes up my writing." Who was I to argue with creative insight?

As the semester progressed and we began a short story unit, I continued the showing, not telling, assignments, but only occasionally. I knew better than to wear out a good thing. One day, after reading the short story "The Fifty-First Dragon," I gave them this sentence: "The dragon's countenance was hideous."

"What's *countenance* mean?" was the sudden chorus.

"Look it up," I told them. And they did.

The next day, their descriptions about the dragon were wonderful, and everyone knew what *countenance* meant. A little flicker of insight entered my mind. I could teach vocabulary with these sentences, and the students would have to do all the work! They soon had showing, not telling, sentences that had such words as *pugnacious, sagacity,* and *lithe*. And some of their writing changed in tone, depending on the words I gave them. I even tried to see what they would do with a much more sophisticated sentence: T.S. Eliot's "April is the cruellest month." Their responses certainly were creative, and several expanded the sentence in much the same way as Mr. Eliot meant. At this point, I should have recognized the potential of showing, not telling, sentences as a way of exploring literature; but I did not. I needed more time.

Later in the year my ninth grade class began the study of John Steinbeck's *Of Mice and Men*. I was ready with discussion questions, quizzes, reading assignments, group activities, and the final essay question. I planned to review and use the ideas of setting, plot, character, writing techniques, and theme as we explored the novel. And I knew I wanted the students to do some writing to help them better understand John Steinbeck's story and characters. We had recently completed some journal writing in a poetry unit, so I was looking for a different way to get them to write. I thought of showing, not telling. Could I make up some sentences from the book similar to the few I had taken from the short stories? As I wrote some samples, I realized I could group them according to setting, plot, character, and so forth. Here are a few examples:

> It was peaceful in the woods along the Salinas River.
> The bunkhouse was obviously a place where men lived.
> Lennie was different.
> George and Lennie had a dream.
> Curly and his wife had a different relationship from the one George and Lenny had.
> George's and Lennie's relationship was like that of Candy and his dog.

As the first few assignments came in, I knew I was on to something. The students were reading the book more closely in order to *answer* the telling sentence. I told them they could use John Steinbeck's words, but they would have to organize them to provide the transitions and closings. They were using examples from the text to clarify what the general telling sentence said. I have always struggled to get students to use examples from their reading to support their generalizations. Now they were doing it without a lot of lecturing or cajoling on my part. And I discovered another benefit. I no longer needed to give those little reading quizzes that I used to give to make sure students were doing their readings. The compositions were taking care of that, too. When we completed our study of the novel with a more comprehensive essay, students wrote with better support than they had before, pulling examples from topics they had previously developed.

I was pleased with the improvement in my students' writing as a result of showing, not telling, but something was still bothering me. I was doing a lot of the hard thinking for the students. I was creating the telling sentences; I was organizing them around topics and techniques; I was doing much of the analysis. I knew that my ultimate goal would be for them to create such telling sentences, since not only was it important for them to find specifics to support the generalizations, but also it was important for them to be able to work the other way and arrive at more sophisticated generalizations based on seemingly unconnected details found in their reading.

Our concluding literature assignment for the ninth grade was *Romeo and Juliet*. I wanted students to have fun with the play, explore the language, read passages, act out parts, watch a film of the play, and generally have a good time, yet still pay attention to its literary content and ideas. We were not going to write during our reading of the play, but a final essay would be required.

As I looked over the various essay topics I had developed and collected from years past and as I thought about all the showing, not telling, my students had done during the year, I realized this was a perfect time to see whether they could come up with their own telling sentences. After all, if the sentences were any good, I could use them some other time. And if the students had learned anything from their practice, their telling sentences ought to be good summaries of what they were learning from the play. I asked each student to turn in ten telling sentences, organized in the following manner: two setting sentences, two plot sentences, five character sentences, one theme sentence, and one writing technique sentence. The results exceeded my expectations. Here are some of the students' sentences:

> Verona is full of love and hate.
>
> The apothecary's shop, where Romeo buys poison, is a dirty, rundown place.
>
> Romeo is a "fortune's fool."
>
> Tybalt is full of mischief.
>
> The relationship between Romeo and Friar Laurence was similar yet different from the relationship between Juliet and the Nurse.
>
> Despite their bitter hatred of each other, the Capulets and the Montagues were very much alike.
>
> Feuds seem to destroy the most innocent ones.
>
> Those who act in moderation have a better chance at survival.

I could tell quite a bit about a student's understanding of the play from the telling sentences. I put a check mark by one of them and told the student to write an essay elaborating on that sentence. In this same manner, I chose sentences that would give students a challenge but would be within their level of skill.

I am just beginning to discover how to use telling sentences to help students be more explicit, to help their reading, and to enhance their understanding of both reading and writing. They are writing more and I am reading less. Now students are not limited to writing a number of assignments based on how many papers I can read. That is a good start that I gained from a great idea: showing, not telling. Isn't it curious how simple concepts turn out to be so subtle?

Showing, Not Telling, About *The Canterbury Tales*

By Sue Ellen Gold

Former English Teacher, Irvine High School,
Irvine Unified School District;
and Teacher/Consultant, UCI Writing Project

Just three weeks into my first semester as a high school English teacher, I knew I was in trouble. I was teaching Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales* to a group of bright, reasonably motivated students who worked hard, listened well, laughed at the correct times, and understood almost nothing. Left on their own with the text, they floundered in the 600-year stylistic gap. Because I knew my students were caught up in the twentieth century visual world of television, movies, and video, I decided to develop a lesson that would draw on their innate abilities to visualize. To do so, I used Rebekah Caplan's showing, not telling, process.

Now, when I teach *The Canterbury Tales*, one of my first goals is to move my students past what I call the "text as God" plateau, the point at which they revere the text, not because they understand or appreciate it, but precisely because they do not. To do this, I begin by reading a few lines at a time out loud and then questioning, "What does this mean? Do you like that? Is this the sort of person you would like to invite home for dinner?" When the students are prodded to think of the characters outside the fourteenth century context, they are soon able to drop their Chaucer-induced awe and

When the students think of the characters outside the fourteenth century context, they drop their Chaucer-induced awe and enjoy and even understand the text.

SUE ELLEN GOLD

get on with the job of enjoying and even understanding the text.

This comfortable teacher-read / student-answer pattern usually lasts through the first seven or eight characters. At this point, I step out of the presentation mode and arrange the class in groups of three or four. The students maintain these groups for the remainder of the unit. These groups are assigned a portion of the remaining characters, and they are expected to answer the following questions for each:

1. Who is the character?
2. What is his or her occupation or station?
3. Describe his or her appearance?
4. Does he or she say anything?
5. Does your group like or dislike the character? Why?
6. Choose five of your own adjectives to describe the character.

These groups then take turns presenting their findings orally to the class and guiding the class discussion.

The next step helps prepare the students to begin using their visual arsenal. Each group is reassigned several characters and, drawing on the class discussions, develops *telling* sentences for each; for example: "The Squire was young and vain"; "The Summoner's appearance was something to behold"; "The Miller was belligerent." After the class shares the sentences, each student picks one to develop into a *showing* paragraph.

At this point, the class is ready to categorize the pilgrims, and we spend a lively session debating which characters are good, which are bad, and which are absolutely horrible.

Most students have, by this time, been convinced that Chaucer *is* accessible, and they are ready for the prompt. They are asked to assume the guise of a fourteenth century traveler who happens to arrive at the Tabard Inn on the same evening as the pilgrims. During the course of the night, they will somehow encounter at least three of the group who will, through coversation, action, and appearance, reveal their true personalities. The narrator is also expected to describe the town, inn, and social atmosphere and to develop a narrative thread that holds it all together.

The next week is spent doing short precomposing assignments, both during and outside the class time. I bring in costume books and posters, and the students brainstorm their ideas about appropriate fourteenth century clothing. I often have to guide them on the details, as well as explain that polyester and rayon made their debut much later.

The class also discusses the varied possibilities for the Tabard Inn itself. These have ranged from dirt floors with chickens underfoot to elaborate taverns with extensive, highbrow clientele. Here are two showing paragraphs from a student's paper which introduce the reader to the Tabard:

> As I got off my horse, I began to hear voices and laughter coming from inside the Inn. While I was tethering my horse, I looked up at the starry sky, which had the appearance of black velvet with pearls carelessly cast upon it. Glancing back at the Inn, I noticed that the doors were open and this made me feel welcome. As I walked into the building, I saw that each of the doors was engraved with *The Tabard*.
>
> On this particular night, The Tabard was packed with people, making it seem small, despite its large size. Once my eyes adjusted to the light emitted by the burning torches and glowing candles, I bought a mug of ale, found a table, and stepped on a roaming chicken in the process of doing so. While drinking my ale, I finally took time to look around. The Tabard itself seemed fairly new with its stone walls and

> ceilings. There were many wooden tables to sit at, each one adorned with candles. While some people were sitting on benches, others used empty boxes and ale kegs as furniture. To my right, in the center of the room, there was a large, circular, stone fire pit with black, charred scraps of wood in it. No fire tonight, I thought to myself. It's too warm tonight.

After the students have visualized the setting in which their encounter will take place, each one is ready to choose the three pilgrims he or she wants to encounter. I suggest one from each category—"the good," "the bad," and the "absolutely horrible." After the students have decided, I spend time discussing how visual and aural clues such as dress, speech, and mannerisms can help build a character. Since Chaucer gives relatively few details of this sort, the students are challenged to pick out the specifics Chaucer does give and then to generate additional ideas on their own. As a class, we practice filling out, on the chart shown below, information on some of the less popular characters; then each student completes the same task for his or her three pilgrims.

After the students have completed the previous step, I ask them to practice writing a plot with their groups. To accomplish this activity, I randomly choose three characters; and each group role-plays potential situations that could bring the three characters together. I warn the students to pay particular attention to what they know of the characters and how they might react in various situations. Obviously, there are innumerable possibilities. An example from one tenth grade group included the following:

> **Wife of Bath**
> **Knight**
> **Pardoner**
>
> Wife falls over one of the Prioress's dogs. The Knight comes to her aid by removing the dog and helping her up. The Pardoner rushes over to her, offering some relic to help her heal her bruised elbow. She shakes him off, scoffing at his high voice. She turns to confide to the narrator that she dislikes the Pardoner's greasy, lanky hair.

The same types of activities are conducted to develop dialogue. At this point I find it appropriate to discuss correct punctuation and the misuse of slang.

Each student is now set free to develop his or her own setting, characters, plot, dialogue, and tone. With additional group assistance on revising and editing, each student is capable of completing a well-written, cohesive narrative. Because this unit draws so heavily on the showing, not telling, technique, the students are able to use their tremendous potential to visualize and then fluently describe Chaucer's world. Their success in this effort ensures their future enjoyment of Chaucer, and I am always excited to read the papers and see what new details these modern teenagers add to the fourteenth century text.

Pilgrim

Clothing
  Color ______________________
  Type ______________________
  Accessories ______________________

Personality
  Speech habits ______________________
  Visual mannerisms ______________________

Activities he or she likes to do ______________________

Using Cooperative Learning to Facilitate Writing

Using Structures to Promote Cooperative Learning in Writing

By Jeanne M. Stone
Cooperative Learning Consultant;
and Teacher/Consultant, UCI Writing Project

and Spencer S. Kagan
Former Professor of Psychology, UC Riverside;
Director, Kagan Cooperative Learning

Once upon a time, as all fairy tales start, there was a teacher who loved to teach writing. She did not have a wicked stepparent to thwart her means of enjoyment, only a sense that there had to be an easier way to teach writing. One day her fairy godmother heard her lamentations and told her about the UCI Writing Project. From the day her application was accepted, it seemed like a match made in heaven; and the teacher lived happily ever after, teaching writing through the stages of the writing process and enjoying every minute of it.

Then one day this teacher attended a training session in the structural approach to Cooperative Learning. She immediately saw the connection between the communicative processes involved in the writing process and Cooperative Learning. With these two instructional ideas interwoven in her classroom teaching strategies, she lived even more happily ever after.

Teachers use basic Cooperative Learning structures in all stages of the writing process to involve the students with each other and with their writing. When teachers use Cooperative Learning to teach writing, they can facilitate the interactive stages of the writing process: prewriting, responding, evaluating, and publishing. Rather than being lectured to by the teacher, students within their teams discuss at length the topic at hand, collect ideas, share writing to receive feedback, develop editing skills, and share the finished writing with the whole class. Using the Structural Approach to Cooperative Learning, the teacher fosters fluency, rethinking of content and form, and publishing of

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the final piece of writing through student-to-student interaction.

Cooperative Learning and the Writing Process

Cooperative Learning structures used throughout the stages of the writing process provide teachers with a wealth of ideas and instructional strategies. In practice, a writing lesson can follow from one Cooperative Learning structure to another, from stage to stage, creating a multistructural lesson. The following writing lesson, based on *The Three Billy Goats Gruff,* shows how Cooperative Learning structures can be used during each stage of the writing process. The objective of this lesson is for students to create new ways of dealing with the troll and then to rewrite the ending of the story.

Throughout the following lesson only a thumbnail description of the Cooperative Learning structure used is given. During each stage of the writing process, a structure (or structures) illustrates the use of Cooperative Learning. Each structure has its own domain of usefulness and can be used in various stages throughout the writing process. For a detailed description of the structures, and their usefulness in the writing process, see Spencer Kagan's *Cooperative Learning*[1] and Jeanne Stone's *Cooperative Learning and Language Arts: A Multi-Structural Approach.*[2]

Example of a Writing Lesson Using Cooperative Learning

The section that follows contains a discussion of how to integrate the structures from Cooperative Learning with the seven stages of the writing process: prewriting, writing, responding, revising, editing, evaluating, and publishing.

Prewriting

Students begin their prewriting with Team Discussion (working in teams of four members) to talk about bullies and create a definition of a bully. Each team records its definition, which a representative from each team shares with the rest of the class. Students continue the activity by using Paired Reading to review *The Three Billy Goats Gruff.* In Paired Reading two students share a copy of the story and read alternate paragraphs. When the students have finished reading, they use Team Discussion to define the billy goats' problem.

Students participate in a Team Interview to "meet" the characters and explore their feelings about the bully under the bridge. In this activity each team member becomes one of the characters in the story: the smallest billy goat, the middle billy goat, the largest billy goat, and the troll. In turn, each character stands up to be interviewed, in his or her role, by the other team members.

Using Roundtable, the students create a list of ways to get past the troll. Students pass a paper and pencil around the team so that each team member, in turn, records an idea for getting past the troll. Through Roundtable all students participate, and different viewpoints are shared. The students who may have a richer background on the Roundtable topic can help the others.

Writing

Students begin the actual writing by reviewing the list the team created and selecting an alternative solution to the problem of the troll (bully). The students then "Fastwrite" to record their new endings fluently. They write what they think should happen, without worrying about organization or correctness, a process that encourages fluency.

Next, using Three-Step Interview, students practice presenting their writing to an audience. During the first step of Three-Step Interview, students, working in teams of four, pair up to interview each other. One student reads his or her writing while the other listens and asks questions from the viewpoint of the intended audience; for example, a parent, fellow student, or friend. Next, the students reverse roles. Finally, each student shares with the team the essence of the partner's writing. On the basis of how the other students react, students then rewrite or add to the fastwrite to create a new ending for the story.

Responding

Structuring a time for responding in the classroom increases students' success. A whole-class sharing session using student writing presented on an overhead projector or chart paper models responding for the class. "Gambits" (open-ended,

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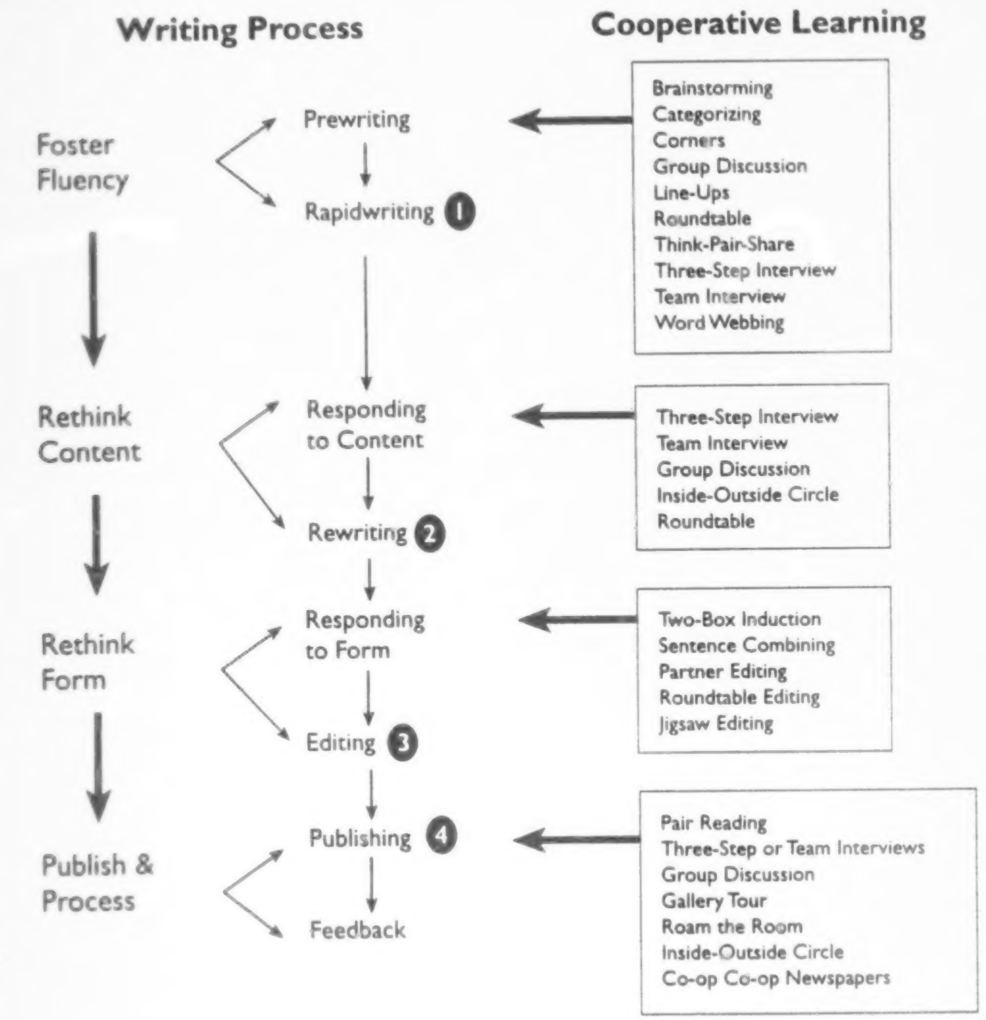
[1] Spencer S. Kagan, *Cooperative Learning.* San Juan Capistrano, Calif.: Kagan Cooperative Learning, 1992.

[2] Jeanne M. Stone, *Cooperative Learning and Language Arts: A Multi-Structural Approach.* San Juan Capistrano, Calif.: Kagan Cooperative Learning, 1992.

Cooperative Learning and the Writing Process


Writing Process
Cooperative Learning
Foster Fluency
Prewriting
Rapidwriting ❶
Brainstorming
Categorizing
Corners
Group Discussion
Line-Ups
Roundtable
Think-Pair-Share
Three-Step Interview
Team Interview
Word Webbing
Rethink Content
Responding to Content
Rewriting ❷
Three-Step Interview
Team Interview
Group Discussion
Inside-Outside Circle
Roundtable
Rethink Form
Responding to Form
Editing ❸
Two-Box Induction
Sentence Combining
Partner Editing
Roundtable Editing
Jigsaw Editing
Publish & Process
Publishing ❹
Feedback
Pair Reading
Three-Step or Team Interviews
Group Discussion
Gallery Tour
Roam the Room
Inside-Outside Circle
Co-op Co-op Newspapers

❶ = Notes, Letters, Journals, Stories, Lists, Narrations, Logs, Descriptions, Biography, Autobiography, Poems, Dialogue.
❷ = Show don't tell, Appealing to sanses, Point of view, Emphasis, Audience, Foreshadowing, Momentum, Character Development.
❸ = Colorful adjectives, Complete sentences, Word choice, Alliteration, Rhyme, Meter, Concrete detail, Verb agreement, Organization, Proofreading, Sentence Combining, Topic Sentences.
❹ = Mail, Modem, Read, Bind, Illustrate, Post, Perform, Gift wrap.

The source for this chart is Spencer Kagan and Laurie Robertson, *Cooperative Learning: Co-op Across the Curriculum*. San Juan Capistrano, Calif.: Kagan Cooperative Learning, 1993. p. Language Arts: 3. © Spencer Kagan, Kagan Cooperative Learning. Reprinted by permission of the publisher.

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Teachers use basic Cooperative Learning structures in all stages of the writing process to involve the students with each other and with their writing.

SPENCER S. KAGAN

model phrases) can be provided to guide students in making appropriate responses.

After students have finished writing their new endings to *The Three Billy Goats Gruff*, each team member is given three response handouts. Using Simultaneous Roundtable, team members pass the four story endings around the team. Each student reads the new ending in front of him or her and then writes statements, questions, or suggestions on a "Response Sheet" handout. The story ending is then passed to the person on the left. The Simultaneous Roundtable is completed when the team members have read and responded to each of their teammates' writings. The writings and the responses are then returned to the writer for review.

Gambits for Responding

Pointing

I like the part when you said . . .

I liked the words . . .

. . . and . . . stuck in my mind after you finished reading your writing

I didn't understand . . .

I wanted to know more about . . .

Summarizing

I think the main point of your writing is . . .

To me your story says . . .

To me the word . . . , summarizes your writing.

Telling

When you said . . . , it made me think of . . .

I felt . . . when you read your story.

I wondered . . . when you said . . .

I saw . . . in my mind when you were reading . . . part of your writing.

Source: Jeanne M. Stone, *Cooperative Learning and Language Arts: A Multi-Structural Approach*. San Juan Capistrano, Calif.: Kagan Cooperative Learning, 1992, p. 19. © 1992 by Kagan Cooperative Learning. Reprinted by permission of the publisher.

Revising

Throughout the writing process students continually reread and make changes. After the students have finished their writing and received responses from others, they look at the writing as a whole and answer such questions as:

Does my writing say what I want it to?
Did people understand what I wanted them to "see"?
Do I need to add more details?
Does my writing communicate to the correct audience?
Does my writing successfully meet its purpose?

Cooperative Learning structures help students to develop techniques that address such ideas as organization, sentence structure (sentence combining and sentence expansion), word choice, clarity, and emphasis. The instructional part of the writing lesson may occur before students begin the writing process or while they are revising their papers.

Two-Box Induction is one structure that can be used to develop the concepts students need when they are revising their papers. For example, if the teacher noted that short, choppy sentences occurred throughout the students' writing, a lesson on sentence combining could become a part of the

Response Sheet

Writer's name ______________________________

What did you like best about this paper? What made it hold your attention?

What questions do you have? What is confusing or unclear to you?

What would you like to know more about? What needs more detail?

How would you rate this story on a scale of 1 (low) to 4 (high)? If you give a rating of 1 or 2, tell what you think would make the story better.

Source: Jeanne M. Stone, *Cooperative Learning and Language Arts: A Multi-Structural Approach.* San Juan Capistrano, Calif.: Kagan Cooperative Learning, p. 1:10. © 1992 by Kagan Cooperative Learning. Reprinted by permission of the publisher.

As students engage in a variety of cooperative learning activities—many focusing on various types of problem solving—they build critical thinking skills.

JEANNE M. STONE

writing lesson. To use Two-Box Induction, the teacher designates two boxes as Box 1 and Box 2 and adds an item to each box (using examples from students' papers is recommended):

Box 1 : There were three billy goats. They were on the hill.
Box 2 : There were three billy goats on the hill.

The teacher asks the class members to think about the differences between the sentences in the boxes. Students pair up with another student and discuss their answers. As more simple sentences are added to Box 1 and more combined sentences are added to Box 2, the teacher can use Think-Pair-Share for students to process the information. Students *think* about their responses, *pair* to discuss them with a partner, and then *share* them, in some way, with the class. As students learn the rules for adding sentences to the boxes, they add items to Box 1 and Box 2 rather than give the rules. This process continues until all students have had a chance to contribute sentences. Each team then develops a definition of combined and simple sentences and discusses the uses of each.

Editing

During the editing stage of the writing process, students look at correctness. Teachers refer to mechanics and grammar skills taught previously. Students can work cooperatively to edit their work and provide support for each other. Because students need to learn to edit their own writing, cooperative activities will not always be used.

As students enter the editing stage of the lesson, the teacher reviews the necessary conventions that students need. Numbered Heads Together is the Cooperative Learning structure used to check for understanding and to help develop mastery of a specific skill. In Numbered Heads Together the students number off from one to four within each team. The teacher then asks a high-consensus question (one with specific, identifiable answers) and tells the students to "put your heads together" and make sure that everyone on the team knows the answer. The teacher calls number one, two, three, or four; and all students with that number raise their hands or stand and respond.

Numbered Heads Together contrasts with a competitive whole-class question-and-answer period in that (1) all students can participate; (2) everyone is accountable for having an answer; and (3) the students with the right answers are appreciated rather than looked down on because they help their teammates prepare to answer the question, thus building positive interdependence.

Partner Editing allows students to edit their own writing while being coached by a teammate. In Partner Editing, partner 1 reads for errors in his or her own paper while partner 2 coaches. Then partner 2 reads his or her own paper, while partner 1 coaches. Working in pairs, students coach each other, while editing their own writing for punctuation, capitalization, and spelling. This coaching occurs in three rounds:

1. *Punctuation Round.* Partner 1 reads his or her writing orally, listens for, and then marks with a period or comma the pauses that he or she "hears." Acting as a coach, partner 2 stops partner 1 when he or she reads past a pause, or punctuation, in the writing. When partner 1 finishes, the roles are reversed.
2. *Capitalization Round.* Using the same procedure as in round 1, the students each, one at a time, read orally through their own writing, checking for correct capitalization.

3. *Spelling Round.* When students check a paper for spelling, it is best to Backwards Read. Students read their own papers, starting at the last word, and touching each word, as they check the spelling, word-by-word, backwards to the beginning of the paper. When a student is unsure of a word, he or she circles it and continues. After both partners have checked their own papers with Backwards Read, they trade papers and read their partner's paper the same way. After finishing checking for spelling errors, students use dictionaries, each other, or the teacher to correct and verify the spelling of circled words.

Evaluating

Evaluating offers final feedback to the students. Their story endings can be shared with other students or the "audience," whose members make comments, ask questions, or do both. Gallery Tour and Roam-the-Room adapt well to sharing finished pieces of writing. In Gallery Tour each team's finished story endings are posted in one place. Next to each story ending, a blank sheet of paper (comment sheet) is mounted for the other teams to record comments or questions or both about the story ending. Starting in front of their own writing, the team members travel, in turn, to each team's posted writings. After reading each team's story endings, students record comments, questions, or both on the comment sheets.

In Roam-the-Room the story endings with comment sheets are mounted throughout the classroom. The students randomly wander throughout the room, reading the story endings, reacting on the comment sheets, and then returning to their seats to compare their reactions to the different story endings with their teammates.

> *One should not aim at being possible to understand, but at being impossible to misunderstand.*
>
> QUINTILLIAN

Publishing

A finished piece of writing can be published by being charted, posted, illustrated, mailed, or included in a newspaper or magazine. A quick way to allow students to present their story endings to the other students is to use Inside-Outside Circle. In this activity students form two concentric circles with the inside circle facing out and the outside circle facing in. A student in one circle reads the story endings to the student across from him or her and that student responds. The students then change roles. After both students have read, each student makes a quarter turn to the right. After the teacher gives a direction ("Walk to the third person."), the students rotate around the circle, face a new partner, and again read their story endings to each other. The teacher continues to give directions so that students share their story endings with a number of different students.

Integrating Language Arts Curriculum Through Cooperative Learning

The writing process occurs as just one part of an integrated language arts program. Without adding more to the curriculum, the structural approach naturally enhances the listening and speaking components of a language arts program. Moreover, as students engage in a variety of cooperative learning activities—many focusing on various types of problem solving—they build critical thinking skills. One additional and essential plus of Cooperative Learning is that it fosters social development. Through Cooperative Learning, the writing process becomes not only a cognitive but also an affective enterprise.

Practical Ideas for Using Cooperative Learning to Facilitate Writing

Implementing Cooperative Learning in a Native American Classroom

By Reba McLaughlin
Former English Teacher, Sherman Indian High School;
and Teacher/Consultant, UCI Writing Project

I believe that the only way to implement Cooperative Learning effectively in a classroom is to experience the activities first yourself through in-service training. I had an opportunity to do just that early in 1989 when the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC) team and curriculum consultants began working with staff from Sherman Indian High School, a residential boarding school accommodating students from approximately 77 different tribes.

Some persons suggested that intertribal conflicts and rivalry would defeat any effort to get students working cooperatively and interactively. I did not accept that notion for a moment. I had already made some progress toward increasing students' participation in my classroom. However, the students' prevailing behavior was to fill out ditto sheets at their seats or to fall asleep in class.

Perhaps my desire to increase students' participation in classroom activities convinced the interviewers and Carol Booth Olson, Director of the UCI Writing Project, to include me in the 1989 Summer Institute; or maybe the statement "I need help" did the trick. For whatever reason I was accepted, the experience provided the tools necessary for me to proceed.

The excellent presentation on Cooperative Learning structures by Russell Frank, a UCI Writing Project Teacher/Consultant, and the activities from the UCI Writing Project itself served as a model, enabling me to implement Cooperative Learning and interactive learning in my classroom.

Assisted by a few of my more responsive students, whose cooperation I had been cultivating, I began to establish Cooperative Learning writing groups. The steps are as follows:

1. I created groups of five to six students, using their reading scores to ensure an academically heterogeneous mix (reading levels ranged from the fourth grade to the twelfth grade). I took care to place at least one strong reader/writer in each group. I did not consider representation in each group according to tribes but, rather, left that mix to chance.
2. I asked members to choose a group name. I gave little direction at first; but when I noticed the increasing frustration, I suggested that group members combine their names to form a group name, choosing things they had in common, or create a name that would reflect their combined personality traits. Now that I have had experience with one cooperative learning-oriented class, I can share the names chosen by that class as a model for next year's students.
3. I then asked each group to design a poster that would highlight their group's name and reflect images and symbols associated with it. The poster for one of my groups, "Sacred Feelings," is included as Figure 1.
4. Groups then posed for a photograph that we put in the center of each poster. Students were shy about this activity at first. But once the members of one group had pasted their photo and hung their poster on the wall, others were excited to follow.
5. Next, I chose and trained one group to model a writing group for the class. (They were terrific!)
6. After breaking the ice with the modeling of a writing group, I asked each group to appoint a recorder, provided them with a set of criteria with which to critique their first

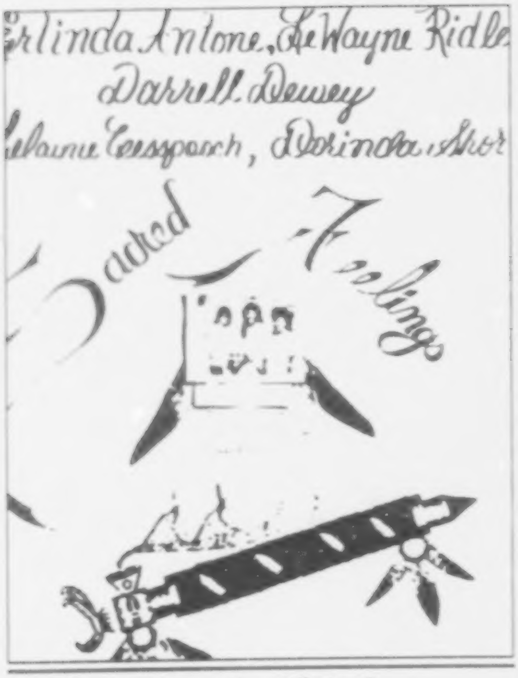

Fig. 1. Portion of Poster "Sacred Feelings"

pieces of writing, and set the peer group process in motion.

7. I gave individual grades for the writing but a group grade for the sharing as a way to encourage positive group dynamics.

I have only just begun to use Cooperative Learning, but because of its immediate benefits, I initiated cooperative reading groups and the development of a book of Indian stories that we wrote and compiled for Native American students in elementary and intermediate schools. Learning in my classroom became more interactively based, and I saw students from a diverse mix of tribes working cooperatively side by side. But, rather than speak for my students, I'll let them speak for themselves regarding Cooperative Learning:

> *I think we learn more in a group. Our communication skills really improved.*
>
> FRANK S.

> *More people generate more ideas. . . . We learn from each other.*
>
> OLETHA L.

> *Everybody gets involved in what we do. . . . It's more fun.*
>
> MIKE H.

> *You can get a better idea of what you are learning about through another person's outlook. You're not only helping yourself but others too.*
>
> LARRY Q.

> *It gives students a chance to speak out. . . . Five brains are better than one.*
>
> MIKE J.

> *We learn better when we get everyone's opinions. . . . We put them all together and get an intellectual answer. . . . We learn from each other. I like working in groups.*
>
> HOPE C.

More than 85 percent of the students preferred Cooperative Learning to seat work, and I'm 100 percent convinced that Cooperative Learning is effective.

Fostering Peer Response Groups Through Cooperative Learning

By Russell Frank

Principal, Altimira Middle School,
Sonoma Valley Unified School District;
and Teacher / Consultant, UCI Writing Project

In the sixth grade I experienced the magic of responses from peers. Mr. Pierce, my teacher, read a student's parody of Ian Fleming's James Bond, Agent 007, and Goldfinger entitled "Yellow Pinky." I vividly remember the convulsed laughter and tears as we enjoyed the story. I can only guess at the author's pride and perhaps surprise as he witnessed our responses. I also remember wanting to write as well as he and wanting to share my work with my peers.

I was lucky enough to have had many opportunities to experience the joy of responses from peers—of having an effect, of making a difference. However, I have also experienced the fear of inadequacy—of laying open one's private thoughts to acquaintances or even to strangers. Both experiences convinced me of the value and vulnerableness of sharing.

Years later, as a teacher, I tried peer response groups (PRGs) in my classroom. Students in groups of four or five read their own texts aloud and shared responses. I discovered that students lacked (1) skill in responding meaningfully to student-generated texts; and (2) the interpersonal and group skills that often keep groups together. These problems were often frustrating for my students and me. Therefore, I grew to appreciate the complex factors affecting successful PRGs.

I knew I wanted to help students create what Donald Graves calls a "community of writers," through which students expand their literacy in an environment where they value and respect each other as authors with important, interesting life experiences to be shared through reading, writing, listening, and talking. Developing this community required combining literacy skills and interpersonal, cooperative skills.

Ideas from the Writing Project helped me to develop literacy, especially writing and response skills. Peter Elbow's ideas for sharing writing in *Writing Without Teachers;* Mary Kay Healy's approaches for building peer response groups shared at the UCI Writing Project Summer Institute; and Rebekah Caplan's ideas for teaching descriptive/narrative ("show, not tell") writing in her book, *Writers in Training*, helped create this part of the community.[1]

Activities that helped bond students were missing in many early attempts at implementing PRGs. Fortunately, I discovered that Cooperative Learning can help create the positive climate necessary to establish a community of writers. By integrating concepts from Cooperative Learning and from the Writing Project, I found that successful PRGs provide students with:

- The fun of real-life audience response and connection
- Response which leads to rethinking and revision
- Opportunities to learn from the writing strategies and approaches of peers
- A more developed sense of others' points of view

Developing successful PRGs involves coaching students to assume new attitudes and responsibilities. The process cannot be accomplished in a couple of weeks. It involves several chronological steps:

1. Building a classroom climate
2. Grouping students in teams or response groups
3. Building teams by structuring activities that build positive interdependence among team members
4. Teaching, modeling, and coaching writing/response skills[2]

Building a Classroom Climate

Building a classroom climate helps establish a cooperative, friendly "our class" attitude among the students and between the students and teachers. This attitude helps lead toward the "community of writers." Climate-building activities can be as simple as having students bring in their baby pictures and asking peers to identify the owners. (Another example of a climate-building activity is a people-search, in which students list information about themselves; for example, favorite food or television show, number of brothers or sisters, or type of pets.) Students then search for people in class with similar characteristics. Students whose interests are similar sign each other's list.[3]

For the random-grouping activities described in the next paragraph, it is helpful to have students generate a list of unique facts about themselves; for example, winning an award or traveling to an exotic place. Students may turn these lists into art objects, such as mandalas or personal coats of arms, and use them to share information about themselves.

Random grouping can be used as a climate builder, especially at the beginning of the year. The teacher randomly deals each student a playing card (from ace to eight) that corresponds to eight numbered tables in the class. Students take their mandalas or coats of arms and go to their assigned tables where they meet the three others in their group. Teammates pair off, introduce themselves to each other, and talk about a unique or amusing fact about themselves that is illustrated in their artwork. The process of interviewing a partner is repeated twice until all four group members have talked to each other. Then each person tries to recall the others' names and facts. Partners help each other until every partner can recite the name and fact.

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[1] These publications are cited in the "Selected References" section.

[2] The following books have helped me develop approaches to building positive classroom climate and group interaction: Spencer Kagan, *Cooperative Learning.* San Juan Capistrano, Calif.: Kagan Cooperative Learning, 1992; and Roger Johnson and David Johnson, *Learning Together and Learning Alone.* Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, Inc., 1987.

[3] The preceding footnote lists publications by Spencer Kagan and Roger and David Johnson that contain descriptions of many climate-building activities.

Random regrouping and doing other climate builders regularly for several weeks help students develop networks of acquaintances until they know almost everyone in the class. Periodic climate-building throughout the year helps maintain an "our class" attitude.

Organizing Successful Peer Response Groups

Random grouping is quick and easy to implement, but it can leave teams imbalanced by gender, ethnicity, ability, or citizenship. For this reason I usually avoid keeping a random group together for long. Sharing and responding to peers' writing can be a difficult challenge—one that requires sensitivity and trust. Because of this challenge, and so that students may work with a range of peers, I believe that PRGs should be carefully structured according to students' academic abilities, ethnicity, gender, leadership abilities, and social skills.

Typically, PRGs are heterogeneously structured. Teachers may wish to wait several weeks before assigning students to PRGs, so that climate-building activities can help to create networks of acquaintances and the teacher can have a clearer idea about students' abilities and student cliques. The criteria one sets up (ability, gender, leadership, or ethnicity) should be flexible. For example, if a good reason exists to create an all-girls group or to put two or more members of an ethnic group together, a teacher should consider it.

I assign students to their PRGs in a way that, to many students, *appears* to be random. While students are working quietly, I deal each one a playing card that corresponds to his or her assigned table. Then, at once, students gather their material, turn over their card, and go to their assigned tables as if they were doing random teaming. Each student finds out his or her partner's first and last names and something fun about that person. By this time the students may already know their teammates because of previous contacts. To help unify each team, the teacher directs the students in team building.

Preparing for Team Building

Team building nurtures a sense of team identity and mutual support among a group of students. This activity is a crucial part of creating successful PRGs.

"Create a Story" exemplifies a round-robin team builder that encourages all partners to collaborate in creating a story. As one paper and one pencil are passed around the group, each person adds one word at a time to create a story based on a phrase or sentence, such as "Joe Cool left school." The interaction sparks laughter and draws the team together physically, emotionally, and mentally. Stories are then read aloud to the class. In a variation of this activity, each person writes as many words as possible in five to ten seconds. When time is called, the paper is passed to the next partner and so forth until classroom time or the story ends.

Building a Team's Identity

One goal of team building is to create a positive, original team name that represents what the partners have in common. This act symbolizes the team's coming together and forming positive interdependence. Several team-building activities help to foster this unity.

Partners interview each other in pairs to discover information. The interview could include some teacher-directed questions, such as what animal or machine would they be if they had to and why they would choose it. After the interviews partners introduce each other and take notes on the introductions. When the interviews are completed, a circle is drawn on construction paper; and partners write all common facts in the middle of the circle. All facts that are unique to specific individuals are written outside the circle.

On the basis of the information written inside the circle, the team creates a positive name that represents something that all team members share in common—a name with which both students and teachers can be comfortable. For example, a team

Peer response groups are a powerful way for students to help each other become more caring, perceptive, and literate.

RUSSELL FRANK

which discovered that all the members liked going to the movies and chose birds as their animals might choose "Flying Movie Fans."

Students create team banners on manila folders with the team's name in fancy letters, a team photo or logo, and the team members' signatures. The banner is hung on a coat hanger over the table whenever teams are working on cooperative projects.

Teaching Response Skills

While climate building and team building create cohesive classes and teams, teachers also help develop students' response skills. Rebekah Caplan's "showing, not telling," strategy is an effective point of departure for introducing and practicing response skills. This strategy moves students away from their overreliance on vague, overly general, and commonplace discourse, which she calls "telling," toward specific, original, figurative, and sensory-based discourse, which she calls "showing."

To introduce the first "show, not tell," writing assignment, I role-play a bored student amusing himself during a lecture that a volunteer "teacher" delivers from a book. When the role play is finished, students share what they have observed and heard. I draw a circle on the board as if we are going to cluster ideas, but I leave the center empty and ask the class members what they have observed. Some observations are specific: "slouched in your seat"; "tapped a pencil on the desk like you were drumming." Others are more general (telling): "You flirted"; "You wrote a note." When these telling statements are being shared, the teacher writes them in red and asks questions that invite the student to "show" the concept more or to develop the idea. How did you know I was flirting? What did the note say? Finally, the class agrees that these observations show or illustrate boredom. *Boredom* is written in the center circle of the cluster. Then I give the students the telling sentence: "The kid was bored" and ask them to show it in a descriptive paragraph.[4] When the students have completed the assignment, I randomly read aloud four or five student pieces, modeling three basic responses to the writing. Although a wealth of responses to these assignments are possible, teachers, for simplicity's sake, initially may want to limit the modeling to three responses:

1. I like . . . (a specific word, phrase, sentence) . . . because . . . (specific reason).
2. I want to know more about (something in the piece).
3. Ask questions.

When teachers introduce, model, and coach students in these basic responses, students are less likely to give vague statements such as "I liked it because it was good." To make the responses more meaningful, students are coached to identify particularly effective texts and give reasons for their effectiveness. For example, "I liked 'tapped a pencil like a drummer' because I could hear a rhythmic sound" is a more specific and meaningful response.

I also emphasize that a controlling and nonsupportive response, such as "You need to write more details," violates the spirit of the "community of writers." Few of us like to be told what to do, especially with our creative works. Changing a directive response to a question improves the tone of interaction; for example, "What do you mean by flirting?" or "How could you show flirting?" facilitates discussion and revision better than does a statement such as, "You need to show more details about flirting." (Consistent modeling and coaching will enable students to resist the intial impulse toward directive or controlling responses and to turn them into questions that provoke more thought and development.)

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[4] A more detailed version of this lesson appears in "Bobby B. Bored" in *Thinking/Writing: Fostering Critical Thinking Through Writing*. Edited by Carol Booth Olson. New York: HarperCollins College, 1992, pp. 55–68.

As students become more sophisticated response partners, teachers may wish to model other types of responses, such as the following:

- This piece made me feel . . .
- This piece reminds me of . . .
- This piece is like (a color, another story, a movie) because . . .

To develop their writing and response skills, students write assignments based on two or three telling statements per week. For example:

The room was a mess.

He (or she) looked scared.

Homeless people need help.

Recording Responses

An important rationale for PRGs is the potential for encouraging student revision. A great discussion of student writing in a PRG does not necessarily lead to revision. One way of increasing the likelihood that responses from students will be a springboard for revision (aside from teaching students about options for revision) is to demonstrate how to record their responses on their rough drafts. This record helps preserve possibilities for revision. It also becomes a kind of transcript, giving the teacher feedback on the quality of the group's interaction.

To demonstrate the recording of responses, the teacher places a transparency of anonymous student writing on the overhead projector and models the following process to the class while students write responses on a photocopy of the material shown from the projector. Eventually, all PRGs follow this four-step procedure on their own:

1. The teacher who assumes the role of the text's author reads the text aloud, enabling the students to hear the text as they follow along. (The incongruity between what is read aloud and what is on the page often leads an author to self-revision and self-editing.)
2. The class silently *re*reads the text. A second silent reading often deepens understanding of the text.
3. The class responds, and the teacher records the responses on the transparency. For example, a student may say, "I liked when the author said, 'tapped his pencil on the table like a drummer,' because I could hear the tapping sound." The teacher may underline the phrase, draw an arrow to the margin, and write the reason why the student liked it: "I could hear the tapping sound." Meanwhile, each student also records the responses and questions on his or her copy of the text. Since PRGs are often used to help students revise, the teacher may want to remind students that they may forget what was said; but they have a written record to help guide revision.
4. The teacher (acting as author) asks questions about the text. When writers finish their texts, they often have questions about weak or strong parts or whether a particular part was clear. For example, an author might ask: "What came to your mind when I wrote . . . ?"

At the end of the discussion, the transparency and the students' copies should be full of meaningful, useful questions and responses.

Introducing Roles in Response Groups

During the process of building class climate, teams, and response skills, teachers may also want to introduce, model, and coach students in how to assume roles that help groups function smoothly. By assuming one of four roles within the PRG—taskmaster, gatekeeper, monitor, or timer—each partner becomes responsible for monitoring an aspect of group dynamics. A discussion of these roles appears in the sections that follow.

Taskmaster

Any group can get off task. The taskmaster knows the directions for completing the task and politely directs the group members' attention to it when they become distracted. Modeling polite redirection of a group is important. A good taskmaster:

- Knows the directions (See the previously mentioned four-step procedure.)
- Says things like, "We're getting off task. . . . We should be doing . . . " at the right times
- Has good eye contact and body language

Gatekeeper

The gatekeeper monitors participation and makes sure that everyone has an opportunity to respond. Active response partners sometimes dominate discussions. They should be acknowledged for their contributions, but attention should eventually be shifted to quiet partners who are encouraged, but not required, to give responses. Good gatekeepers:

- Maintain good eye contact with all group members.
- Are aware of who is participating and who is not.
- Say such things as "We haven't heard from Tiffany yet. What do you think, Tiffany?" or "Thanks (for your suggestions), Carlos, but what do the others think?"

Monitor

Student authors receiving responses to their writing often enjoy the interactions so much that they forget to record responses on their drafts. The monitor politely reminds authors to record the responses so the feedback will not be lost.

Timekeeper

A timekeeper in each group helps prevent the group from spending too much time on one text and not enough time on another. In a 50-minute class with four texts to share, each person will have about 12 to 15 minutes of response time. A timekeeper helps the group move forward equitably and frees the teacher from clock-watching.

Determining When to Introduce Roles

Teachers may want to introduce, describe, model, and coach the roles before students begin working in their PRGs to provide plenty of time for them to practice each role. An ideal time to introduce and practice gatekeeping comes when teams practice responses to students' texts. The monitor may be introduced after the teacher has demonstrated how to record responses. The role of the timekeeper may be saved for last because it requires the least amount of coaching.

Teachers also facilitate the learning of roles by recognizing good examples of this activity in class and by providing students with time to talk about the group process and the effect of the roles on it. Teachers may also provide a laminated card to each partner describing the roles to which they are assigned; that is, how the role looks and sounds.

Monitoring Peer Response Groups

I send the peer response groups (PRGs) to the corners of the room or into the hallway to help minimize noise. Students sit so that the author is reading her or his duplicated copy (use carbon paper stapled between two sheets) of the text aloud as one teammate follows along with the author. At the same time two other teammates follow the original text. Each student is assigned or volunteers for a role and is given a card that describes the role's responsibilities. Roles can be rotated within the group during the period, or they may be kept for the entire period. The PRG follows the four-step procedure for each text as each author records responses to his or her text on the author's copy.

During response time the teacher observes group dynamics and writes notes, listing the characteristics of groups that are functioning well and giving the reasons. The teacher periodically tells teams how the members are doing. The teacher may wish to assign points or a grade based on these observations. An excellent way to monitor groups, especially toward the end of the period, is to ask to see one partner's paper and evaluate it for

> *By building a cooperative classroom climate, developing carefully organized teams, helping teams develop cohesiveness and identity, and teaching social skills, peer response groups are a powerful way for students to help each other become more caring, perceptive, and literate.*
>
> RUSSELL FRANK

meaningful, useful responses and questions from the team.

Reflecting on the Group's Effectiveness

At the end of the period, it is important to ask the teams to reflect on the effectiveness of their group's interaction. Students may be asked to write their responses to or to talk to each other about the following questions:

- How often did each person perform his or her role?
- Which role helped the group to work well?
- Which responses were the most helpful?
- In which ways can the group's members improve the way they worked?

The teacher can also share his or her observations based on the monitoring of a response group.

Grading Students

Depending on the class and teacher's inclination, the group dynamics within a PRG and the quality of responses can be graded; each partner in a group receives the same grade. Depending on the assignment and the student's skills, texts shared in class may be revised and brought back to the class for a final edit-around for spelling and punctuation before being submitted for individual evaluation. Inevitably, I have found that students extend, enrich, and clarify their final drafts because of the responses received in their PRG. This activity makes reading those final drafts much more rewarding.

But what I find even more rewarding than the improved writing is the process—standing back and watching 35 or more students, oblivious to my presence, having fun reading, sharing, and discussing writing. That process did not always happen; Cooperative Learning helped make it happen. By building a cooperative classroom climate, developing carefully organized teams, helping teams develop cohesiveness and identity, and teaching social skills, peer response groups are a powerful way for students to help each other become more caring, perceptive, and literate.

Writing

Developing a Sense of Audience, or Who Am I Really Writing This Paper For?

By Mary K. Healy
Director, English Credential Program
UC Berkeley School of Education;
and Associate Director, Research and Evaluation,
Puente Project

Simply stated, having a developed sense of audience on the student writers' part means that as students write, they have images of the intended readers of their writing flickering—consciously or unconsciously—around in the background. To the degree that these images are sharply delineated in the writers' minds, student writers will select details and develop their pieces of writing, anxious always that their known readers' expectations be fulfilled.

Students who have developed beyond the point where writing is more of an exercise in physical dexterity than an exercise in composing thoughts on a piece of paper can tell what their teachers will look for when reading and evaluating their papers. For some teachers, neatness really counts—no ink blots or crumpled papers are allowed. For others, mechanical accuracy is primary—periods where they belong, capital letters signaling sentence beginnings, and commas accurately placed and not scattered like confetti to make an interesting, albeit illogical, design. To still other teachers, what counts is what happened from the first to the last draft—what changes were made, what tightening and expanding, what diction—in sum, what evidence there is of a mind at work revising, reseeing. There are a legion of other teachers' priorities—from sophisticated vocabulary choices and syntax to the students' adherence to injunctions, such as never starting a sentence with the

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EDITOR'S NOTE: For further information on the concept of audience in writing, see Mary K. Healy's monograph, *Using Student Writing Response Groups in the Classroom*, which was published in 1980 by the Bay Area Writing Project, Education Business Office, 615 University Hall, Room 1040, University of California, Berkeley, CA 94720-1040.

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word *and*. Whatever the constructs may be through which the teacher views the students' papers, it is certain that the students will understand what they are as soon as enough marked writing has been returned. And the students will know the real nature of their audience—and be fairly accurate in describing the teacher's values—regardless of how the teacher describes orally what he or she values. Students can do this because they make their generalizations about what is important to the teacher on the basis of hard evidence: the grades and final comments they get on their papers.

The task of developing a sense of audience is, in fact, a misnomer. After a few years in school, student writers already have a sense of audience, even though they might look at you blankly and mumble something like "We don't do that in here" if asked for which audience they are writing. A more accurate description of the task for the thoughtful teacher of writing might be described as expanding the students' sense of audience to encompass a wider range of responsive readers. And a major step in this expansion is simply to provide audiences for the students' writing beyond that of a conscientious proofreader and evaluator.

In the landmark study *The Development of Writing Abilities (11–18)*, James Britton and his colleagues in England outlined a broad spectrum of the possible audiences that students might meet in the writing situations in their schools. In their research sample Mr. Britton and his colleagues used this range of audiences as one of the characteristics by which they categorized over 2,000 student papers from subjects across the curriculum. As the researchers put it, ". . . one important dimension of development in writing ability is the growth of a sense of audience, the growth of the ability to make adjustments and choices in writing which take account of the audience for whom the writing is intended."[1] The main categories which the researchers used and the percentage of papers falling into each category are shown in the accompanying table, which is reproduced here from *The Development of Writing Abilities (11–18)*.

It is evident from the research James Britton and his colleagues conducted that the ever-present audience for the writing done in most classrooms is the teacher-as-examiner. This audience can make itself manifest in many ways: a single letter grade for overall quality; split letter grades, one each for content and mechanics; a written critique of the piece, outlining the strengths and weaknesses of the style, organization, structure, or mechanics; a written response to the piece, featuring the reader's involvement with the content and raising questions of clarity and development. However, in all of these instances, the emphasis is still on the evaluation of a final product.

Just as writing for an audience of teacher-as-examiner is the most prevalent in schools today, writing for self is the least prevalent. Yet the self as audience is crucial to young writers' development

Table Distribution of audience categories*
(n = 2,104)

Categories	*Percent*
Child to self	0.5
Child to trusted adult	1.6
Teacher-learner dialogue	38.8
Pupil to teacher, particular relationship	1.0
Pupil to examiner	48.7
Expert to known laymen	0.0
Child to peer group	0.1
Group member to working group	0.2
Writer to his readers	1.8
Child to trusted adult/teacher-learner dialogue	0.6
Teacher-learner dialogue/pupil to examiner	4.0
Teacher-learner dialogue/writer to his readers	1.0
Miscellaneous	1.7

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> *A poem . . . begins as a lump in the throat, a sense of wrong, a homesickness, a lovesickness. . . . It finds the thought, and the thought finds the words.*
>
> ROBERT FROST

because it allows students to discover how the act of writing can be functional for them in the day-to-day life of the school. Keeping logs or journals of reactions to class events, to books or films or TV programs, and to chapters in a textbook can be a valuable first step in making personal sense of new information. Writing to work out new ideas, to raise questions, and to find out what one understands enables students to see that writing can be of direct benefit to them both in their initial development of a new subject matter and as preparation for the more formal, extensive writing required in their courses. Because students have an extended record of their own emerging opinions and understandings, they have themselves as resources when it comes to developing and shaping an essay or a final report. The teacher can encourage this type of writing by providing models of subject-matter journals or logs, by setting aside class time for this writing, by allowing credit toward the final grade for completion of such writing, and by allowing students to keep their logs handy during the writing of tests or essays in class.

One of the next steps a teacher may take to expand student writers' sense of audience beyond that of writing for teacher-as-examiner or for the self is to begin to respond to the students' writing at stages earlier than the final draft. This response can take the form of comments written on a first draft, which provide the writer with a sense of a real reader's initial reaction. These comments may be questions: "How old were you when this happened?" "What did the room look like?" "How did she feel when you said that?" These questions indicate to the writer that the reader is interested in what is going on and wants more information. Or the comments may take the form of an anecdotal response: "The same thing happened to me when I was in high school." "I remember being terrified of water also." Such comments let the writer know that the reader has made a connection with the piece, and the feedback is very important. Another form these comments might take is that of responsive coaching: "Why not leave out the parts about the journey to camp and concentrate on that frightening first night?" "I need more specific details here about conditions in the camp to understand how the rebellion started." All of these responses and their thousands of variations enable the writer to visualize better the effect of the words on a reader. Giving such responses on early drafts allows the writer to make revisions—to work on the piece in progress, not after the writing has been completed, polished, and handed in.

Responses from the teacher like those mentioned previously might be classified in James Britton's audience terminology as teacher as "trusted adult" or as "partner in dialogue." Either audience is certainly necessary before the teacher assumes the traditional role of examiner.

Beyond the variations of teacher as audience, many others can profitably be addressed in classroom writing. Students can write for their peers—either fellow students in their classes or those in other classes or other schools. The key point here is that this writing be genuinely addressed to an audience that will, indeed, read and respond to the writing. Only through this genuine response, with all the attendant confusions and misunderstandings, can a real sense of audience develop. For example, juniors in high school can write to incoming freshmen and describe the school and offer suggestions on how to succeed. In this case, it is crucial that real incoming freshmen read those letters and write back. The whole point is lost if the teacher asks the juniors to write as if they were writing to incoming freshmen and then reads and evaluates the papers herself. For in that case what the teacher has done is set up a double image; the real teacher audience is superimposed on the "imaginary" freshman audience, and the writer's job then becomes doubly difficult. For the sake of an evaluation, the student must imagine what the teacher thinks one should say to incoming freshmen and how the teacher would like it said. It is not surprising that writing of this kind often sounds strained and false; it is almost inevitable when students are placed in an artificial situation in which they are asked to satisfy two different audiences at once. And in addition to the double image difficulty, the student is being asked to perform, in James Britton's words, a "dummy run," a practice exercise instead of a piece of real communication.

There is little reason for relying completely on "dummy runs" when there are so many genuine situations that call for real writing. What follows is a listing of possible contexts in which students can write for audiences beyond the classroom teacher:

Writing for Other Students

1. An exchange of letters between classes. The topic may be a book both classes have read, a film they have both seen, or a reaction to some contemporary issue.
2. An exchange between classes of profiles written about people in the community. This exchange could take place before the final drafts were written so the revisions could incorporate the readers' questions.
3. Notes written to absent classmates explaining what went on in class so the students will come back prepared.
4. Booklets or stories written for younger children and "tried out" on them by the writers in the younger children's classroom.

Writing for People in the Outside World

1. Letters written to authors of works read in class, in which the students discuss points that had arisen during class discussion. Similar letters can be written to film writers or directors.
2. Actual letters of application for part-time jobs.
3. Letters to the editor of local newspapers or magazines in which the student writers discuss topics of interest to students.
4. Oral histories, transcribed and shaped by the students and presented in a booklet for distribution or purchase through some community organization.
5. Stories, poems, or essays for the school literary magazine.
6. Argumentative or persuasive essays on contemporary topics sent to a local political or civic organization.
7. Entries written for writing contests of any kind.

These are only a few of the many possible audiences for students' writing. All of them demand that the writers think about their audience's uniqueness and shape their writing accordingly. The teacher can be of enormous assistance here by showing students how to analyze whom they are writing for. This can be done either by giving exercises in the whole class in which the general characteristics of a known audience are listed on the chalkboard or by asking specific questions about the intended audience of each student who is already working on an initial draft. Questions such as "How much does your audience know about the subject?" or "How formal do you think you have to be in word choice?" subtly remind students that there is no one way to write anything. Rather, the craft of writing demands that students pick the best way in this particular case for this particular audience. And, over time, with thoughtful nurturing from responsive teachers, this sense of an audience's needs will become automatic—as automatic, we hope, as beginning a sentence with a capital letter and ending it, eventually, with a period or a question mark or an exclamation point!

Practical Ideas for Developing a Sense of Audience

An Exercise to Introduce the Concept of Audience to Students and Teachers

By Lynda Chittenden
Teacher, Old Mill School,
Mill Valley Elementary School District;
and Teacher/Consultant, Bay Area Writing Project

The following is a guided fantasy that successfully communicates the concept of audience. Many teachers have used this exercise both in in-service workshops and in the classroom.

First, ask your group to take out a scrap of paper. Tell them this writing will not be turned in or shared without each writer's approval. Ask each member of the group to select a place where, right now, he or she would rather be. Even the most dedicated teacher or student has a fantasy place that he or she periodically escapes to. Ask all members of the group to close their eyes and imagine themselves in their fantasy land.

Pause awhile; then, speaking slowly, ask the members of the group to visualize themselves in their fantasy lands. What is their position? Are they standing, sitting, lying down? After a few moments, ask them to be receptive to the tactile sensations that are part of being there. What is the weather like? What smells might they also be aware of ? What are the sounds that are very much a part of this place? Allow a few more moments for each individual's fantasy to grow.

Encouraging the group members to imagine and believe that they are compulsive recorders who wish to capture this moment so as to be able to relive it later, ask them to begin a diary that will do just that. (See a sample in paragraph number 1 in the next column.)

After four to five minutes, state that you know this piece is unfinished, but skipping a few lines and, remaining in this place, ask them to begin a letter to Mom, or some other loved one, in which they tell the person about this place. (See paragraph number 2.)

After three to four minutes, acknowledge that this letter is also unfinished but, skipping down a few more lines, ask them to begin writing a memo to their principal or superintendent in which they request funds to subsidize their being in this place and which justifies the released time necessary for them to be there. (See paragraph number 3.)

At the end of three to four minutes, ask for volunteers to share the results of their guided excursion to a special place and to talk about what they noticed in their own writing as they did this exercise. Participants are often surprised to discover how much impact audience has on style. When writing for themselves (paragraph number 1), they tend to be very descriptive and detailed. Concentrating on sense impressions, they, in effect, paint pictures of their memories with words. Many of them become so absorbed in writing that when you call them to a halt and switch audiences, they get slightly annoyed. In paragraph number 2, addressed to Mom or a friend, they often assume a more conversational tone and do much more telling than showing. Sentence length is reduced as rich detailed descriptions are omitted from the writing. Finally, in paragraph number 3, the letter to the principal, they become very formal, and the "voice" in the writing is much more distant. Much less is likely to be written during this part of the exercise because the audience sometimes can inhibit fluency. A sample of an unedited exercise that a UCI Writing Project teacher shared with the group will illustrate these general points:

1. A moss green sea turtle glides lazily by, and a huge rainbow striped parrot fish in hues of lime green, turquoise, and tangerine slowly weaves its way through the filtered light. I can hear my breathing through the snorkle as I float upon the surface of the salty ocean, my back broiling in the sun and turning a deep

For teachers and students alike, the guided imagery exercise is an experiential introduction to the concept of audience.

LYNDA CHITTENDEN

shade of crimson. I must appear to the inhabitants of this estuary an ungainly creature—lumbering about in the tranquil waters of Xel Ha. How pleasant it is to float weightlessly in their watery kingdom.

2. Dear Mom:

   Michael and I took a trip to a natural aquarium of sorts called Xel Ha today that was truly fantastic! This is an estuary where the river meets the Caribbean. The whole area is enclosed by a coral reef that keeps the sharks out—thank goodness. Anyway, we went snorkling and saw some of the most amazing fish. The colors were just fantastic! One fish I saw was all the colors of the rainbow. Orange wasn't orange but tangerine. It was really unbelievable.

3. To: Dr. Barrow

   I have enjoyed my vacation in Cancun immensely and see many possibilities for offering a unit of study on this area. I'd like to stay on a bit longer to investigate all the educational possibilities further. I'm sure I could design a class that would benefit my students. I'm planning to take many slides for illustrated lectures on: the natural aquarium at Xel Ha, the Mayan ruins at Tulume, the windy island of Isle Mujeres, etc. I hope you'll be as excited about my idea as I am . . . .

For teachers and students alike, the guided imagery exercise is an experiential introduction to the concept of audience. It makes what could be just an abstract idea tangible and concrete and creates a positive awareness of audience in future writing assignments.

Learning Logs

By Mindy Moffatt

English and History Teacher,
White Hill Middle School, Ross Valley School District;
and Teacher/Consultant, UCI Writing Project

If your students could *freewrite* (à la Peter Elbow) about what they had gleaned during the school day, what do you imagine they would write? As a middle school teacher, I also wondered. What would their perceptions of the day be? The idea of writing in a learning log intrigued me enough to try it.

Starting from the first day of the school year and every day thereafter, students were instructed to write during the last ten minutes "about the day" and to date each entry. Students earned credit for each day's notation. I collected their logs once a week, staggering the collection day so that I would have 30 logs a day to review instead of 180 a week. Each class period had a regular day of the week when the logs were due. I was surprised that reviewing each day's logs took only 20 to 30 minutes, depending on how many quick comments I wrote.

Imagine my reaction when I read Pam's log of the first week:

> 9/9/85: I'm in English class right now (unfortunately). The teacher wants us to write this stupid, dumb, and absolutely boring paragraph. Well, anyway, I'm going to learn in this class—but I also have to because the teacher will probably yell my brains out if I just sit here. I hate this class. I really think it's stupid because it's not like I'm going to grow up and tell my kids to do this.

I hadn't quite prepared myself for such an honest reflection. But I persevered through her accounts:

9/10/85: Well, today I'm in English again! No—I don't want to be but have to be! Well, today we were supposed to be doing a talk about the stupid paper I wrote about yesterday, but the teacher sent me and Michelle out of class because we didn't have the paper, and it was in our locker and she wouldn't let us go get it. This is boring!

9/11/85: Today we got together in groups and discussed things about ourselves. I met some people today that are in our group. I guess it's gonna be cool. Three more minutes until the bell. I have to go home! I'm dying of starvation. I'm getting pretty proud of myself because today I made a friend that was my worst enemy for two years. Bye Bye.

9/12/85: Well, I've got three minutes to tell you everything I have to. I feel fine about my writing. My writing makes me feel good because I write down what I feel, think, and believe, so if people don't like it, that's ok, because it's me and they don't have to be me.

9/13/85: We write in the learning logs so we can write down what we feel, think, and believe. I like the learning logs because we can write down what we want to. There's nothing really I don't like about learning logs.

Reading Pam's account of her first week in the eighth grade made me believe in both the cognitive and affective values of learning logs. This activity provides insight for a teacher to keep in touch with the development of students. I enjoyed writing supportive, positive comments to students; "I feel this way, too!" "I'm impressed!" "Thanks for sharing this."

The students were anxious to get their logs back; not only did they look for my remarks, but also they reread their entries to see what they had written the week before. With some middle school students, it often seemed as if a lifetime had passed during the week. They remembered the captured moments, the exercises in class, and the trials and tribulations that they had survived.

Learning logs provide insight for a teacher to keep in touch with the development of students.

MINDY MOFFATT

After the first week, when students began to trust writing in their logs, I gave them more specific prompts:

Write first about everything you did in class; then tell your reactions and feelings about the activities.

We had read-around groups that helped us with our paper in punctuation and spelling. If I didn't have them, I'd be lost like a needle in a haystack.

Greg Hughes

I got a good start on my draft about Renee. Debbie really gave me some great suggestions on how to spice up my draft.

Kevin Donovan

This was interesting to have other people besides teachers tell you honestly what they think about your writing. . . . I learned how to help other people without giving away the answer.

Heather White

Today we proofread each of our papers. It was kind of fun reading other people's papers and correcting them.

Nico Dourbetas

Today we started to proofread other students' material. I think that it helps me as much as the student I proofread for.

Russell Clark

I had fun working on my paper today. We talked about it and discussed what I could do to fix it.

Eric Degenhart

The class got noisy and Ms. Moffatt almost gave the whole class a detention.

Eric Degenhart

Today, We Noticed things that were
very Interesting and
very Different. I
        Learned that
people Live and
        Listen according to
their Lifestyles and sometimes
their Status.

Chris May

What is something you want to know more about?

I like writing. I would like to learn more about science fiction writing.

Brady White

> I'm a person who is especially interested in new ideas and would like to learn.
>
> *Deborah Wissink*

I knew within a week where certain students needed my assistance; I did not have to wait until later in the quarter to discover that someone was having trouble.

What do you like about our class?

> I do like working in groups because they give opinions and help you with what you are doing.
>
> *Sheila Nora*

> It makes me feel good when I think of something to write. . . . I like it because it lets my mind do the writing.
>
> *Sean Ciechomski*

> I like learning logs because you can tell the teacher how you feel about things.
>
> *Jason Bumcrot*

> It's fun writing in learning logs because you search for and gather your thoughts in a short period of time.
>
> *Russell Clark*

What don't you like about learning logs or our class?

> Sometimes I don't like learning logs because there is either nothing to write about or not enough time.
>
> *Rex Huang*

> I don't like the learning logs but as long as we have to do them, I might as well try and make it fun.
>
> *Anthony Lawson*

If your parents had been watching this class through a one-way mirror, what would they have seen? Explain to them what you were doing.

> If my parents were here . . . they would have seen us in groups talking and commenting about each other's papers which makes it look like we were passing notes or something.
>
> *Rex Huang*

> If my mom or dad were observing our class today, they'd be pleased cuz we got a lot of work done. . . . I'm proud of myself, and I'm sure my parents would be too!
>
> *Stefanie Takii*

> If my parents were observing this class, they would infer that we were a rowdy, unsupervised, uncontrolled class, but in a way independent because even though we were talking a lot, we were also working at the same time.
>
> *Michael Lietzow*

I was learning a great deal about my students' learning processes. Their feelings were validated when I discussed their responses with the whole class. For example, Chris May wrote, "My writing makes me feel good in a way that everybody in the class will probably respect me for it."

When I shared an insight from a log, the students' learning became more personalized, and my teaching became more focused.

Reading their learning logs was an activity I looked forward to, especially after a difficult day. The students' entries were all I needed to remind me of my reasons for becoming a teacher. "This is Ms. Moffatt's learning class," wrote Tashawna Donaldson.

"It gives us a chance to use our brains," said Chuck White. I felt that I had time to adjust my goals and plans so that I could continue to teach students, not just content.

So many enlightening responses appeared in the logs that I made a bulletin board of their disclosures. I noted particularly valuable phrases, allowing students to edit their "freewrite" comments for display. Students valued the log entries more when this postwriting step was added. "I want one of my quotes to go on the board, but I can't think of anything good enough to write," noted Tod Grossman.

Parents also appreciated the learning logs. They were pleased and entertained to see such insight from the students. During conferences with parents the logs became a concrete basis for them to understand a student's perspective regarding goals and expectations of the class. Parents saw that students were learning how to learn, and I was rewarded when parents expressed that they wished their English classes had been like this. They valued the writing and supported the effort.

Students were not the only writers at the end of the class period. I joined them by writing in my own log and allowed them to read my entries. Through this sharing of my own trials and tribulations, I found myself facing the same challenge as they—trusting one's audience. Having ten minutes of "quiet writing time" at the end of each class was immensely therapeutic, especially in a middle school schedule of seven daily periods. We were all more prepared to meet the challenges of our next classes after such closure.

Regardless of the subject matter or the ability levels of students, spending the last few minutes of class writing learning logs allows teachers and students to harvest memories, trust, smiles, and knowledge. As Stefanie Hill explained, "It kind of makes me feel good to know that I'm helping people with using my knowledge and putting it together with theirs to make our writing better." We are learning how to learn with logs.

Telecommunications: A Powerful Tool for Facilitating Writing to a Distant Audience

By Steven Pinney

Former Teacher, TeWinkle Middle School Sixth Grade CORE
Newport-Mesa Unified School District;
and Teacher/Consultant, UCI Writing Project

"Would you hand me the thesaurus?"

"Does community have one or two m's*?"*

"I want them to think I know how to write a decent letter."

Having students write to an unknown and geographically distant audience can be a powerful incentive and teaching tool. By arranging for an audience of students in a classroom from another county, state, or, if possible, country, the teacher can maximize the writers' opportunities to "own" their writing. The audience reviewing students' writing through a telecommunications network exerts a powerful influence on students because the reviewers are unknown. When young authors begin to write, they inevitably want to know who will read their work. When students learn that the peer group reviewing their work will not be from their classroom, they tend to focus more keenly on their final product, which they want to present positively. Writing for another student in their classroom, their teacher, or their parents pales in comparison with having another student in a classroom linked by telecommunications as the audience.

Using Telecommunications

"Do you consider this the best you have done?"

"Well, I've checked the spelling of all the words and compared this final draft with my original plan. . . . Yes, . . . this is my best. I'm ready for you to send it to the class in Placerville now."

While most teachers might feel that they can easily address the issue of a writer's audience within their own classrooms, the technical aspect of making connections beyond their school site may seem overwhelming. This situation is changing slowly as increasing numbers of schools are incorporating instruction using computers and word processors into their curriculum plans. Expanding the use of computers, either in laboratories or in individual classrooms, makes this wider audience more accessible to the mainstream classroom.

With telecommunications as a tool for learning, the teacher is a true facilitator as young authors write to a distant audience. The teacher becomes a resource, providing students with support during the writing process.

Students can complete a variety of individually inspired or teacher-directed writing activities. Once material has been recorded with a word processor, the first step has been taken. To be transmitted, the piece does not need to be rewritten in another form. Students can complete their assignment individually, work with the teacher to complete a collaboratively written piece, or work in cooperative writing teams. This article contains a two-page sample of the writing projects planned for the kids2kids network, which I founded several years ago.

Within the classroom, access to computers, a phone line, and a modem makes the successful connection possible. Those technical tools are common in the business world but less so in education. Accessing a school phone line might seem difficult, yet increasing numbers of adminis-

Writing Projects

The *kids2kids Writing Circle* offers your class a real writing audience. Here is a sample of writing projects planned for the coming school year:

No Place Like
Home

No Place Like Home - students research their family, their neighborhood and their school to gather information for a letter introducing themselves to students in their matched class. The article chosen as best from each class will be included in a special edition of the network student newsletter.

Report of Information

The
Great
Pumpkin

The Great Pumpkin
Letter Writing Campaign - students write friendly letters sharing a remembered frightening moment. Other network students respond from the point-of-view of this great benevolent character offering solace and historical facts of this special time of year.

Autobiographical Incident

Tell
It
Like
It
Was

Tell It Like It Was - students from one class interview older family members asking about childhood holiday memories. Essays are then written in class and sent to sister classes for a response.

First Hand Biography Sketch

kids2kids

Round Robin

Round Robin - a classic team writing assignment receives technical support. Using telecommunications, three classrooms work together to build an exciting three-chapter short story.

Short Story

Special Report
Earth Day
1991

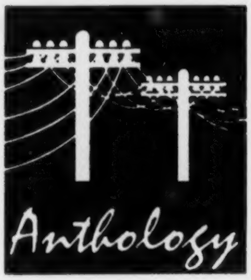
Special Report - students speak out on environmental issues in a variety of formats for a special edition of the student network newsletter: *The Electronic Express.*

Report Of Information,
Speculation About Effect

Superior
Toy, Inc.

Superior Toy, Inc. - student teams write business letters requesting products or services of a company called Superior Toy, Inc. Other students **are** Superior Toy customer service agents and respond.

Problem/Solution



Writers' Anthology - semester magazine of student work in a variety of writing genres. Published twice each year, this collection represents the best of the writing posted electronically throughout the fall and spring.

Join Us !

trators realize that having students' work read by a distant audience has learning value for reluctant writers. Administrators may become receptive to controlled access to school phone lines when teachers take the time to address issues of cost and management. Each year, more classrooms are accessing local and national telecommunications networks and reaping the benefits from communicating with a distant audience.

Once the students' writing has been completed and the technical tools have been set up, the teacher needs to locate viable educational networks. Many teachers who use technology have learned that use of telecommunications works best in the classroom when the teacher directs the activities. Programs available through local and national networks offer classrooms expanded opportunities for writing to an audience and provide activities that address varied modes of writing. Enhancements that teachers have brought to the use of telecommunications in the classroom include calendars for writing activities published months in advance, substantive writing directions, and technical assistance.

Waiting for Responses

"Do you know if she received my letter?"

"I'm worried. Do you think he'll write right back?"

"I sure wish I would hear from them."

Most young writers hastily assume that a response takes just a few hours to complete. However, under the direction of the teacher from the matched class, developing a meaningful response requires following the steps of the writing process. When the originating authors understand the need for patience while the writing process is being completed, they appreciate the energy involved in their own writing as well as that of the student preparing a response. The student wrote a real letter to a real person who needs time to write a real response.

By building a writing curriculum in which students have access to an authentic though distant audience through telecommunications, a teacher maximizes the power a colleague's students bring to the writing instruction. This activity helps the teacher facilitate a powerful and complete writing process within his or her own class and brings a wonderful quality to the work of young authors: the enjoyment of writing to a real audience.

Steven Pinney died in April, 1993, of complications arising from pneumonia. He will be greatly missed by his students at TeWinkle Middle School and at Chapman University; by his colleagues at TeWinkle, Chapman, and the UCI Writing Project; and by all those teachers affiliated with Computer Using Educators (CUE). In May, 1993, Steven was awarded the Gold Disk Award, the highest honor that CUE bestows.

Teaching Writing in the Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Classroom

English Learners and Writing: Responding to Linguistic Diversity

By Robin Scarcella
Director, English-as-a-Second-Language Program,
University of California, Irvine

Increasing numbers of nonnative English-speaking students, here referred to as *English learners*, are enrolling in classes in which full proficiency in English is often assumed.[1] These students have often received special language instruction designed to (1) help them become proficient in English; (2) enable them to participate in the core curriculum; and (3) promote their positive self-image and cross-cultural understanding. However, when they have acquired an advanced level of English proficiency and progress to mainstream instruction, they still need an instructional program to promote their continued development of English-language proficiency. Although writing instruction is only one aspect of that program, it can play an important role since effective writing instruction for English learners can help them gain the academic writing abilities that they need to be admitted to institutions of higher education as well as to succeed in the job market. As is often argued, skill in writing can open the way to success in our society. English learners with effective English writing abilities can succeed in the United States more easily than English learners without those abilities. This article addresses the teaching of writing in the core curriculum to English learners who have acquired advanced levels of English proficiency but who still lack native-like writing skills. It is intended for elementary school and high school teachers.[2]

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[1] Many terms have been used to describe these students; for example, English-as-a-second-language (ESL) students, limited-English-proficient (LEP) students, and culturally diverse students. In this paper the term *English learners* is used. They are defined as "children whose language background is other than English."

[2] These issues are discussed further in "Building Bilingual Instruction: Putting the Pieces Together," *BEOutreach*, Vol. 3, No. 1 (February, 1992), 6–8. (*BEOutreach* is published by the Bilingual Education Office, California Department of Education.)

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English learners with effective English writing abilities can succeed in the United States more easily than English learners without those abilities.

ROBIN SCARCELLA

For all writing instructors whose students speak English as a second language, knowledge about linguistic diversity is not a matter of political liberalism but rather a necessity. What are the most effective ways to teach diverse populations of English learners? In response to that question, this article contains a discussion of some general pedagogical guidelines that can be adapted for teaching writing to English learners and some ways of adapting teaching practices to provide individualized instruction for those students.

Guidelines for Teaching English Learners

The material that follows contains guidelines for effective ways to teach writing to English learners:

GUIDELINE 1

Respect students' home languages and cultures.

Too often, our students feel that their cultures and languages are not valued in their classrooms. The goal in writing programs for English learners is to teach standard English writing, not to replace students' first languages and dialects with standard English. Ideally, we want to build on the students' culturally rich experiences. The goal is not to make students monolingual in standard English; rather, it is to help them acquire standard English in addition to their first language or dialect. To accomplish this goal, we must learn about the students' linguistic and literary traditions and incorporate them into the curriculum. Consider, for instance, the rich literary traditions of Korean students, whose country has a 24-hour *dial-a-poem* telephone service. Young children in Korea are encouraged to keep daily diaries and to enter literary contests. Poetry readings and contests are held during school picnics. Incorporating some of these Korean traditions into the regular curriculum could increase the self-esteem of Korean-American students while simultaneously facilitating their English writing development.

GUIDELINE 2

Give students lots of comprehensible English input.

Stephen Krashen's research indicates that a sufficient quantity of comprehensible English input tailored to the current English proficiency levels of the students aids their overall English-language development. He suggests that a level of English appropriate for the students, one that is neither too difficult nor too easy, facilitates English language acquisition. According to Stephen Krashen, when students receive English input that they do not understand, their English language development does not proceed smoothly.[3] Perhaps this outcome explains why one of my nonnative English writing students complained bitterly about his high school English class. This student claimed that he did not understand what was going on in the class because the teacher talked only about *Shake Spear*.

Several ways can be used to increase the amount of comprehensible English that students receive in class. Familiar, predictable input is often the most comprehensible. Preview questions or warm-up activities inform English learners of the topic of the lessons. Visual aids—pictures, diagrams, charts, gestures, and items from the outside world—also aid students' comprehension. Focusing on the students' own experiences helps learners understand the input.

Another way of helping students understand writing lessons is by relating topics and activities to one another throughout the instruction. D. Scott Enright and Mary Lou McCloskey suggest "integrating a series of related topics using speaking, listening, reading and writing activities. In their unit entitled Rain Makes Applesauce, designed for second through fifth graders, students participate in a variety of activities, including science, math, literature, art, field trips, and cooking 'centered on the theme of apples.'"[4] Similarly, Stephen Krashen encourages teachers to use a series of related topics and activities so that English learners have additional opportunities to understand the input.[5]

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[3] See Stephen Krashen. *Insights and Inquiries*. Hayward. Calif.: Alemany Press. 1985.

Simply talking to students individually provides them with comprehensible spoken English. When teachers interact one-on-one with students, the teachers' English can be tailored to the proficiency levels of the students; and the students' difficulties in understanding the teachers can be determined. Although it is possible for teachers to remind themselves to speak slowly and clearly, teacher-centered lessons almost always prevent instructors from accurately tailoring their language to the students' English proficiency levels. When students can react individually to teachers' comments, using such expressions as "Hm?" and "I don't understand that word," teachers find it easier to know which parts of their conversations students cannot follow.

Because students cannot always be provided with one-on-one interaction, they must be encouraged to converse with one another. Peer tutoring, read-arounds, and cooperative learning activities can provide learners with ideal input for language development since those activities foster the kind of interaction that allows students to use and develop their existing communicative potential as listeners, speakers, readers, and writers.[6] However, teachers need to be aware of the type and quality of language input that students receive when they interact with one another. For example, if during peer editing, revision, or brainstorming sessions, English learners are paired only with other English learners who speak varieties of immigrant English rather than standard English, the sessions may not help them to make significant progress in acquiring standard English writing skills. They may acquire new vocabulary words and structures from their peers, but many of those words and structures may be characteristics of immigrant English varieties rather than of standard English. Students must be helped to develop the conversational skills needed to interact effectively so that they can obtain comprehensible English input. For example, they can be taught such conversational management skills as asking questions when they do not understand and encouraging everyone in their group to contribute.

Often, students understand the teacher's spoken English quite well. One bilingual researcher, Jim Cummins, argues that many English learners acquire conversational skills in their first few years in the United States but fail to acquire the ability to communicate in academic situations in which they cannot guess the meaning of the language they read or hear from the context.[7] As a result, English learners have greater difficulty understanding academic English than informal, spoken English and often struggle with the reading materials given to them.

To make sense of the classroom reading material, English learners need to draw on several kinds of culture-specific knowledge. They have not had the same experiences as those of their native English-speaking peers. They need additional information about the reading assignments to understand them. Prereading assignments and explanations (which include the use of pictures and realia and which develop concepts, vocabulary, and structures used in the reading) all help to build students' comprehension of the reading.

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[4] D. Scott Enright and Mary Lou McCloskey, *Integrating English: Developing English Language and Literacy in the Multilingual Classroom.* Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley Publishing Co., Inc., 1988, p. 281. Reprinted from Robin Scarcella, *Teaching Language Minority Students in the Multicultural Classroom.* Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1990, p. 79. Reprinted by permission of Prentice-Hall, Inc.

[5] See Stephen Krashen and Tracy Terrell, *The Natural Approach.* New York: Pergamon Press, 1983.

[6] See Spencer S. Kagan, *Cooperative Learning.* San Juan Capistrano, Calif.: Kagan Cooperative Learning, 1992, which contains a discussion of cooperative learning and activities for cooperative learning in the classroom.

[7] Robin Scarcella, *Teaching Language Minority Students in the Multicultural Classroom.* Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, Inc., 1990, p. 102.

Books such as the classics have been abridged and simplified to make them more accessible to English learners. Easy reading for pleasure, including the reading of comic books, seems to ease the path for English learners who later want to read more difficult material. The reduced length, larger print, pictures, and illustrations of easy-to-read materials make them comprehensible to English learners who lack English proficiency.

However, if students are to develop proficiency in academic English, they must be exposed to reading materials that are more difficult to read than simplified readers. Students need to read academic texts—essays, articles, and books—that are not usually simplified for nonnative English speakers. *Narrow reading* helps students to understand such academic material. When students read *narrowly,* that is, read many materials on a related topic or materials written by one author, their English proficiency improves because they are repeatedly exposed to similar vocabulary and grammatical structures. Using this method, students have multiple opportunities to acquire English words and structures.[8]

GUIDELINE 3

Check to make sure that the students understand.

Many ways exist to ensure that students understand the English used in their lessons. Asking students whether they understand the instruction is often ineffective. They are often embarrassed to admit not understanding. Head nods in many Asian countries mean "We are following you," not "We understand what you say." No one likes being spotlighted (singled out in front of the classroom and asked to perform before others), least of all English learners who lack English proficiency. Yet many ways exist to get students to display their understanding without embarrassing them. A quick true-or-false quiz may be helpful. Students can also act out a story or perform the actions in the story as they reread it a second time. They can retell, summarize, or analyze the reading material; discuss it with a group; illustrate it; or use it to complete a different task. Students with even very limited English proficiency can be asked to respond chorally or individually to *yes/no* or *either/or* questions or to give one-word answers to general questions. Students with more advanced English proficiency will need to be challenged so that they are encouraged to use their English in more sophisticated ways.

GUIDELINE 4

Encourage students to use language purposefully.

Exposing learners to comprehensible input in the writing classroom is not enough. For example, they can be given the right type of comprehensible reading material; but to get them to learn from it, teachers need to have them interact meaningfully with it and to use it in their writing. Encouraging students to convey real messages (such as an invitation or a complaint) to real audiences (such as peers or political leaders) helps students to understand the significance of writing. When English learners begin to use English to accomplish goals that they themselves see as important, they realize that English is not just a series of word lists or grammar forms but a living language for communication. Moreover, when they are engaged in sustained meaningful communication related to their own personal interests, they feel that their efforts to write are worthwhile. This in turn helps learners to develop positive attitudes about writing.

GUIDELINE 5

Provide writing tasks at the appropriate level for English learners.

The kinds of writing English learners do greatly affect their language and writing development. It is important to provide English writing assignments that are a little beyond the current English proficiency levels of the students.[9] If students are given tasks that are too easy, they are not challenged and do not learn new skills. Yet too often the demands made on students to write beyond their English proficiency levels are too harsh. If students have to use too many new vocabulary words and grammatical structures in an activity, they may spend too much time consciously trying to string sentences together or translating from their first languages. In the end they may become frustrated and even feel themselves driven to plagiarize. For instance, an English learner was asked to write a book report on a sophisticated novel. He knew he did not have the ability to complete the task. So he fabricated the entire report and titled it "Catch Her in the Right."

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[8] Scarcella, *Teaching Language Minority Students,* p. 86.

[9] See Stephen Krashen, *The Input Hypothesis: Issues and Implications.* New York: Longman Publishing Group, 1985.

For many students the alternative to plagiarizing is carrying out a difficult writing assignment in their own garbled, ungrammatical English. If they are given no feedback on their writing, they may come to believe that their poorly formed sentences constitute correct standard academic English. This situation actually happened to one of my own students. Only when I showed him that *firstable* was not in a dictionary was he convinced that *firstable* was not an English word!

A good rule of thumb to follow when deciding on writing tasks is to have the students write what they can comprehend and say. An exact fit between a student's English proficiency level and the writing task is improbable. Both the content and the genre of the material contribute to the difficulty of the task. The easiest content for English learners is related to their everyday activities, such as those with their families and in their neighborhoods. Culturally familiar topics are also easier for students to write about. Students more easily complete tasks that are personally interesting and that they would do outside the classroom than tasks that they consider irrelevant. For instance, tasks such as ranking which equipment to take camping may interest students who are avid campers but may have little relevance for students who hate camping.

GUIDELINE 6

Allow students to choose their own writing topics and tasks.

This practice enhances the development of students' ability to write in a second language because choice is a critical component of writing. Allowing students to choose topics and tasks in which they are interested motivates them to elaborate on their ideas, clarify their thoughts, revise their texts, and perfect their writing.

English language learners come from distinct cultural backgrounds and have distinct interests and needs. Some students need to write in personal genres—including notes, telegrams, postcards, diaries, and informal letters—while others need to write in institutional genres—including summaries, reports, and essays. All benefit from writing about their personal experiences. Tasks focused on the students' personal experiences are the easiest ones for English learners because they can readily relate to them. One of my Latino students was delighted to describe her experiences learning to write Spanish in a public school in Michoacán. After describing her past education, she lamented, "Sometimes I feel my life experiences are not important here in United States. I'm happy you want to know about me."

GUIDELINE 7

Provide comprehensible, constructive feedback.

English learners need different types of feedback on their written work than do native English writers. English learners need to know alternative ways of using language, vocabulary items, grammatical structures, and specific transition words that increase the cohesion of their essays. Developing students' sense of audience awareness is not enough; English learners need to know how to vary their language appropriately to appeal to diverse audiences. Similarly, those students need to know which level of language to use to display formality and informality. They need to know the rhetorical structures and language associated with different genres such as the narrative, short story, and persuasive essay. Giving English learners the precise language they need to compose entire sections of their writings can be helpful. In general, the more comprehensible, constructive feedback that students receive, the better. This statement does not mean that teachers need to put masses of red ink on the papers of English learners. Comments can be discussed during conferences and editing sessions, and students can be individually coached.

GUIDELINE 8

Grade fairly.

In conjunction with this guideline, teachers need to reward and acknowledge students' efforts while simultaneously avoiding culturally biased writing tests that show what students cannot do rather than reveal their strengths. Students need honest information about their progress. To ensure fair grading, teachers can create writing tasks that bias for the best (elicit the best sample of the students' writing).[10] Teachers may need to give intermediate and advanced English learners one grade for grammar and another for content and organization. Students who are just beginning to acquire English will need more encouragement and positive feedback. Although teachers may be tempted to cushion the efforts of English learners, at no time should they be led to believe that they have acquired perfect standard English when in fact they have not yet acquired a high level of proficiency in standard English.

GUIDELINE 9

Build a climate of trust in which students feel free to try out new linguistic behaviors.

Teachers need to lower their students' anxieties by inviting, but not demanding, students' participation and by creating rules of etiquette for the classroom such as "No putdowns," "Help others," and "Listen carefully."

Affect is important in language development. *Affect* refers to the learner's affective characteristics, such as motivation, attitudes, anxiety, self-esteem, cooperation, competition, and learning styles and strategies. In the writing classroom, teachers must pay close attention to these characteristics of learners so that activities can be designed and tailored to meet learners' needs. A lack of knowledge about students' affective characteristics may cause writing instruction to fail. Unless learners feel comfortable writing in class, they will not enjoy the experience. To create writing situations that lessen students' anxiety, teachers need to begin with writing tasks at levels appropriate for the students and also occasionally to provide easier tasks that give opportunities for all students to attain success. In this way teachers can help the students enjoy using English to strengthen their positive feelings about the language and to discover new meanings.

Individualized Instruction for English Learners

This section contains a discussion of ways to provide individualized instruction to English learners. An impressive diversity of English learners are enrolled in California classrooms. Among those students are at least three groups:

1. Recent immigrants who can read and write well in their first languages (These students have an important advantage over the other two groups; their previous schooling fosters skill development in English.)
2. Recent arrivals who find writing in academic contexts painful (These students are illiterate in their first languages and have had little or no previous schooling. They have acquired some English conversational skills, but in academic contexts they are unable to communicate effectively in writing.)
3. English learners who are fluent in a variety of nonstandard English forms (These students fill their pages easily, but the writing is not academically acceptable. The students have lived in the United States for a lengthy period, some for as long as five years, and they are often unable to relate to the immigrant experiences of others.)

The students come from many different educational traditions and cultural backgrounds. Observations of their speech and writing reveal that they have acquired different levels of English proficiency in each of the four language skill areas—listening, speaking, reading, and writing. They follow diverse patterns of acculturation. Some spent many months eagerly preparing for their life in the United States, while many others were forced to come here by their parents. Some hear a lot of English outside school; others hear none at all; and yet others hear only nonstandard varieties of English.

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[10] Scarcella, *Teaching Language Minority Students*, p. 158.

All students can benefit from the rich experiences and literary traditions of recent arrivals who have been educated in their own countries and are literate in their first languages. Some of these recent arrivals may transfer first-language writing skills into their second language. For example, some Korean learners might avoid writing thesis statements since avoiding the statement of theses in some types of Korean writing is conventional and preferred. Similarly, some Latino learners might hold different expectations of their audience. For instance, unlike some European-American learners, they might expect their audience to appreciate descriptive language—even in expository essays. However, first-language transfer does not occur wholesale. It interacts with other variables—such as age, proficiency level in English, degree of acculturation, and writing proficiency in the students' first language. Not surprisingly, the more experience the learners have in writing about specific topics in particular genres, the more English writing proficiency they gain. Recent arrivals are sometimes unable to write in specific genres because they simply lack the experience.[11]

Immigrants who are illiterate in their first languages and who have had little previous schooling have their own rich cultural traditions that can be appreciated in their classrooms, too. These students will need to learn the written symbol system of English. Increased emphasis will need to be made on the English alphabet, the formation of letters, the patterns of spelling, and the stylistic conventions of English (including capitalization and punctuation). Before moving on to more difficult levels, these students will need time for their initial language skills to mature. In addition, they will need encouragement and many successful experiences using the language during short and frequent easy-writing assignments.

> *We learn that words have an independent life of their own, grown out of echoes and connotations and associations.*
>
> JAMES J. KILPATRICK

Students who have lived here for a long time, some for as long as five years, and who show signs of beginning to acquire a nonstandard variety of English need to be given much exposure to standard English input inside the classroom. Teachers must not think that students in this group have mastered standard English because they know English slang and converse fluently. Feedback about their progress in English is especially critical. The students must not be allowed to think that they know standard written English when they do not.

Today's writing instructors need to respond to linguistic as well as to cultural diversity. English learners have different language learning experiences, and teachers need to become sensitive to those experiences. Becoming sensitive to and learning about the educational traditions and cultural backgrounds of linguistically diverse students is not impossible for teachers but imperative.

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[11] Robin Scarcella and Rebecca Oxford, *The Tapestry of Language Learning: The Individual in the Communicative Classroom*. Boston: Heinle and Heinle, 1991, p. 122.

Practical Ideas for Teaching Writing in the Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Classroom

The Missing Piece: Enhancing Self-Esteem Through Exposure to Culturally Diverse Literature

By Pamela W. Jones
MacArthur Elementary School,
Long Beach Unified School District;
and Teacher/Consultant, UCI Writing Project

I believe that the self-esteem of culturally diverse students is greatly enhanced when students are allowed and encouraged to examine literature from the perspective of their cultures. This idea comes from a personal experience and from Jawanza Kunjufu, author and educational consultant, who says specifically that:

> African American children need to be given a frame of reference that is consistent with their culture. Our children should analyze images, literature, history, [and so forth] from an African frame of reference.[1]

This idea provides a "missing piece" for me and possibly for many of today's culturally diverse students who may miss the opportunity to become avid readers, critical thinkers, and fluent writers.

I am reminded of my high school years, when I attended an integrated school staffed by a faculty that was 99 percent white. The academic project for all college-bound students was the senior theme, a 30-page research paper consisting of a biography of an American author and critiques of at least five of the author's books. Prior to this experience, I had lived for 11 years in a totally African American community and had attended a grammar school where the history and traditions of the culture were integrated into the curriculum. I was well steeped in my culture. Additionally, the civil rights and black awareness movements were on the rise; therefore, I automatically considered prominent African American authors for my senior theme.

After considering Lorraine Hansberry, Booker T. Washington, and Richard Wright, I decided on Langston Hughes, because he had been a college classmate of my father and had published more than five books. I cannot believe my naivete at that time. I should have realized that no African American authors would be on the English Department's recommended list. When I asked if I could research the author of my choice, the teacher replied, "Oh, no, we are doing only the classics." So, I settled for Willa Cather and immersed myself in *The Lost Lady* and *My Antonia.* Although Willa Cather seemed to lack relevance for me, I persevered in order to get that grade—meaningful education or not.

Needless to say, that experience did not enhance my self-esteem. But I am excited about the possibilities that the current educational reform movement, particularly in California, offers culturally diverse students. As I look through the *Model Curriculum Standards,* the works of James Baldwin, Richard Wright, Ralph Ellison, Maya Angelou, Alice Walker, and, yes, Langston Hughes are on the list of "Recommended Reading for a Core and Extended Literature Program."[2] Furthermore, I am also encouraged to see the following statement in the *Model Curriculum Standards:*

> Because the diversity of the American society should be reflected in the literature program that students encounter, it is important that excellent writing by authors from racial and ethnic minority groups be sought out and included. This should be done deliberately and with care at each grade level.[3]

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[1] Jawanza Kunjufu, *Developing Positive Self-Images and Discipline in Black Children.* Chicago: African American Images, 1984, p. vii.

[2] *Model Curriculum Standards, Grades Nine Through Twelve.* Sacramento: California Department of Education, 1985.

[3] *Model Curriculum Standards,* p. E-40.

I take this statement as an invitation to teachers to expand and enrich their existing literature curriculum with works by authors from diverse cultures and ethnic backgrounds.

Through integrating core literature and emphasizing critical thinking and the writing process, students have greater opportunities to go into, through, and beyond culturally diverse literature. Students are invited to get "into" a piece of literature by sharing, verbally or in writing, personal experiences that build a bridge between their lives and the book's theme. They are taught to go "through" the story by exploring their knowledge; sharing what they understand; applying what they learn; and not only analyzing the elements of setting, characters' goals, conflicts, events, and solutions but also offering their responses to those elements. Finally, they are encouraged to go "beyond" the literature as they create and evaluate their own experiences based on similar themes and issues that are indicative of their culture and heritage.

Surely, such an approach can greatly enhance students' self-esteem and increase the number of avid readers, critical thinkers, and fluent writers from diverse cultural backgrounds.

Literature for Culturally Diverse Students in High Schools and Colleges

This list of publications provides examples and sources of literature relevant to the experiences of students from diverse cultures.

Angelou, Maya. *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings.* New York: Random House, Inc., 1970.

______. *Singin' and Swingin' and Gettin' Merry Like Christmas.* New York: Random House, Inc., 1976.

Cisneros, Sandra. *The House on Mango Street.* New York: Random House, Inc., 1991.

______. *Woman Hollering Creek and Other Stories.* New York: Random House, Inc., 1991.

Duran, Daniel F. *Latino Materials: A Multimedia Guide for Children and Young Adults.* Neal Schuman Publishers, Inc., 1979.

Ellison, Ralph. *Invisible Man.* New York: Random House, Inc., 1963.

Hamilton, Virginia. *M. C. Higgins, The Great.* New York: Macmillian Children's Book Group, 1974.

______. *Sweet Whispers, Brother Rush.* New York: Philomel Books, 1982.

______. *Willie Bea and the Time the Martians Landed.* New York: Greenwillow Books, 1983.

Model Curriculum Standards, Grades Nine Through Twelve. Sacramento: California Department of Education, 1985.

Recommended Literature, Grades Nine Through Twelve. Sacramento: California Department of Education, 1990.

Stanford, Barbara Dodds, and Karima Amin. *Black Literature for High School Students.* Urbana, Ill.: National Council of Teachers of English, 1978.

Trotter, Tamera, and Joycelyn Allen. *Talking Justice: Six Hundred Two Ways to Build and Promote Racial Harmony.* San Jose, Calif.: R & E Publishers, Inc., 1993.

A Literature Unit of Study About Vietnamese Children

By Lea Kiapos

Teacher, Morningside Elementary School,
Garden Grove Unified School District;
and Teacher/Consultant, South Basin Writing Project

Angel Child, Dragon Child by Michele Maria Surat is a story about a young girl who has just come to the United States from Vietnam and does not like her new school or her classmates. She especially misses her mother, who had to remain in Vietnam because the family could not afford to pay for her and all the children to come to the United States. Since approximately 70 percent of my students are Vietnamese, I thought this story would elicit a lot of response. I was right! Not only was the response positive and enthusiastic, but the

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EDITOR'S NOTE: Several of the publications in this list are available from more than one publisher.

discussion the book generated was among the liveliest, most personal, and most touching that I have ever facilitated.

With most of the stories I use for units of study, I follow a similar format: a prereading stimulus; information about the author and, if applicable, the illustrator; reading; postreading questions at the literal, interpretive, and evaluative levels; and engagement activities.

The entire unit of study may take as little as one class period or as long as two or three days to complete.

Prereading

Show the book to the students, tell them the title, and ask them what they think the story will be about. Ask, too, where they think the story takes place.

About the Author

Michele Maria Surat is a writer and a high school teacher in Richmond, Virginia. She was inspired to write this story to promote understanding between Vietnamese children and their American classmates after hearing a tearfully shared story from one of her students.

Reading

Read the story aloud, taking time to let the children look carefully at the illustrations.

Postreading Questions

These questions are all oral discussion questions presented to the whole group:

1. Why did the children laugh at Hoa?
2. How do you feel when other children laugh at you?
3. What is an Angel Child?
4. What is a Dragon Child?
5. Do you think the principal had a good solution to the problems Hoa and Raymond were having? Tell why or why not.
6. What made Hoa change her mind about telling Raymond her story?
7. How do you think Raymond felt when Hoa told him why she kept a picture of her mother?
8. Describe what you think a Vietnamese fair would be like. What kinds of games or activities would be included?

Engagement Activities

It is not necessary or recommended to do all of the activities listed. Pick those that you feel most comfortable working with and that you think will motivate your students. Be sure to discuss any chosen activity with the whole group so that all students will succeed with the assignment. This procedure helps not only the ESL student but also the reluctant writer and gives all the students plenty of ideas to work with.

1. Students respond to the question: What makes you have an angel face and a dragon face? They use story paper to draw a picture of both, and they write a description of each. The following frame may be helpful:

   When I have an angel face, it is because

   When I have a dragon face, it is because
2. Students write individual miniautobiographies that include their name, place of birth, and when and how they came to the United States (or how their ancestors came to live in the United States if the students were born here). Photographs or illustrations may be included.
3. Students write a brief description of their first day at school. This event can be described as a positive or a negative experience. Papers are read aloud to the class or shared in small groups.
4. Students brainstorm as a class (or in small groups) about how their experiences during their first day of school could have been better and what could be done to help other new students.
5. Students research the origins of their first names. They can ask their parents why they were given their name and what it means or symbolizes.
6. Students discuss special "at-home" names. If students are willing to share their names, ask them how and why they were given a pet name and what it means.
7. Students write and illustrate a description of the traditional school clothes worn by children in their country of origin. American children can ask their parents, or grandparents, what they had to wear when they first

went to school and then write and illustrate a description of those clothes.

8. Students plan a classroom cultural fair. Each student brings in items from his or her culture to be shared, such as food, traditional clothing, toys, items sold to tourists, and photographs. Parents may be invited not only to attend but also to become active participants by wearing traditional clothes, explaining some of the traditions, and describing some of the foods and the occasions during which special meals would be served.

I found that reading *Angel Child, Dragon Child* to my class validated the experiences of my Vietnamese students and enhanced their self-esteem. Equally important, the book gave them a chance to open up and to tell their own stories about leaving Vietnam and arriving as strangers in a new country and a new school. As in the story the non-Asian students in my class gained an awareness of the trials their newly arrived peers had endured. Students mutually respected and accepted each other.

My Name, My Self

By Brenda Borron

Instructor, Irvine Valley College,
Saddleback Community College District;
and Teacher/Consultant, UCI Writing Project

> *"My name is Hue, but you can call me Helen."*
>
> *"My name is Truong, but you can call me Nick."*
>
> *"My name is Dung (yoong) on the roll, but I changed it to Karen."*
>
> *"My name is Rafael, but call me Ralph."*
>
> *"My name is . . . My self."*

When I first read "My Name," by Sandra Cisneros in *The House on Mango Street*, a chord resounded, and I began thinking of my name and my self. How has my name made me what I am? And how have I made my name me?

Then I thought of my students: the *Hues*, the *Truongs*, the *Dungs*, the *Rafaels*, the *Marisols*, the *Guadalupes*, and the *Refugios*. I thought about my students—about their names, their cultures, and our classrooms. And as I thought about these things, I became disturbed.

In Aharon Megged's short story, "The Name," Grandfather Zisskind says to his grandchildren:

> "I'll tell you what ties are. . . . Ties are remembrance! Do you understand? The Russian is linked to his people because he remembers his ancestors. He is called Ivan, his father was called Ivan and his grandfather was called Ivan, back to the first generation. And no Russian has said: From today onwards I shall not be called Ivan because my fathers and my fathers' fathers were called that; I am the first of a new Russian nation which has nothing at all to do with the Ivans. Do you understand? . . .
>
> "And you—you're ashamed to give your son the name Mendele lest it remind you that there were Jews who were called by that name. You believe that his name should be wiped off the face of the earth. That not a trace of it should remain . . .
>
> "O children, children you don't know what you're doing . . . You're finishing off the work which the enemies of Israel began. They took the bodies away from the world, and you—the name and the memory . . . No continuation, no evidence, no memorial and no name. Not a trace . . ."[1]

"They took the bodies . . . and you—the name and the memory. . . ." By changing our students' names—arbitrarily, accidentally, or even at their request—I believe that we as teachers are taking away their cultures and identities. Conversely, in acknowledging and valuing our students' names, we also acknowledge and value our students and, in turn, their cultures and their values.

After some reflection, I began collecting literature in which name was central to character or theme. As I looked, I tried to find literature from diverse cultures, literature that reflects the diverse cultures of my students. Then I began my lesson.

Steps in the Name Lesson

1. Ask volunteers to tell stories about their names.
2. Have students create a coat of arms for their names and their cultures.

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[1] Aharon Megged, "The Name." Translated by Minna Givton. In *Israeli Stories*. Edited by Joel Blocker. New York: Schocken Books, Inc., 1962, p. 102. © 1962 by Schocken Books Inc. Reprinted by permission of the author.

3. Have students investigate how their parents chose the students' names and what those names mean in the family and culture.
4. Have students compile a "The Name I Share" chart for the names they share with famous people, family members, people at school, people in history, and characters in literature.
5. Read literary selections focusing on names; for example:
    a. "The Name" by Aharon Megged
    b. "Major, Major" from *Catch Twenty-Two* by Joseph Heller
    c. The Kizzy section of *Roots* by Alex Haley
    d. Selections from *This Boy's Life: A Memoir* by Tobias Wolff
    e. *Knots on a Counting Rope* by Bill Martin, Jr., and John Archambault
    f. "My Name" from *The House on Mango Street* by Sandra Cisneros
6. Have students research magazine articles on names and naming.
7. Have students locate their names in dictionaries of names and other sources such as *The Lives of the Saints.*
8. Have students write a personal essay on the relationship between their names and their personalities and cultures.
9. Have students share and revise their essays.
10. Have students give speeches about their essays on their names.

As students explore their names, they also explore themselves. Parichat Smittipatana describes what she learned about herself and her culture as she wrote about her name.

Flower from God

By Parichat Smittipatana

Parichat is like silk, a very nice gentle sound which just flows through your mouth. If you pronounce it right, *Parichat* sounds very pretty. It's not too hard, just three simple syllables. You pronounce *Par* like a pear that you eat, *ri* with a short *i*, and then *chat* like chart without the *r*. My name means "flower from God" in Thailand. Also it is the name of a flower whose sweet scent you can smell only in the morning. Most people present these flowers to the monks because of their meaning and their sweet smell. The monks allow only this flower to decorate their temples. The flower represents a virgin with its sweet smell and the purity of a lady with its white petals.

It is a tradition in Thailand, that when a baby is born, its name is given by the monks. It is said that the monks know what we're going to be like in the future; therefore, they know the best names for us. But my parents weren't going to settle for just any name the monks thought up. My dad wanted to call me "Little Brat" because he knew I was going to be spoiled. My mom wanted to call me "Little Angel" because I was a cute baby. They couldn't decide, so they went to the monks.

When I was born, I weighed seven-and-a-half pounds, so my parents brought seven-and-a-half pounds of parichat flowers for the monks when they brought me to the monks to be named. That is how I got my name *Parichat,* as pure as a baby.

I was born in the Chinese year of the ox; that sounds dangerous and wild, but I think it fits me better than "flower from God." I should be sweet, nice, polite, and lady-like, but I'm not.

I don't know why my name was so hard to pick; even my nickname was a problem. My dad wanted to call me "Cherry" because when I was born, our cherry tree gave its first fruit. It was small like me, and red, like my fat cheeks. My mom wanted to call me "Nonk" which means "Little Sister" because I have three older sisters and one older brother. So it was both names for me. I call myself "Little Sister," and everybody else calls me "Little Sister Cherry." When I turned thirteen years old "Cherry" began to sound childish to me, so I changed my nickname to "Sherrie" because it sounded more mature, yet it was still easier for people who can't pronounce my real name to say than "Parichat."

I used to want to change my name to "Patricia" because I'm an American citizen now. I thought I would like to have an American name it wouldn't take everybody ten minutes to say. Doing things like an American—like eating steaks and salads, dressing American, and speaking English—makes me homesick sometimes. I want to speak Thai, which I can no longer remember. The Thai culture and traditions have made me think twice about changing my name. *Parichat* is unique, one-of-a-kind, and it lets me know that part of me is still Thai.

Teaching Writing in a Culturally Diverse, Heterogeneous Classroom

By Pat Clark

English Teacher, Century High School,
Santa Ana Unified School District;
and Teacher/Consultant, UCI Writing Project

A culturally diverse classroom in which students are heterogeneously grouped presents a unique challenge to any teacher. However, it is possible to develop an atmosphere of closeness, empathy, and compassion by using effective writing strategies combined with cooperative group learning.

One such ninth grade class had just reregistered for the second semester. Hispanics, Asians, Pacific Islanders, blacks, and whites composed the sea of faces in front of me. I told them that we would be studying literature from each of their cultures and that our first selection would complement the unit on the East and Southeast Asia that they were studying in their history classes. I had chosen a chapter, "The Moon Lady," from Amy Tan's *The Joy Luck Club.*[1]

Each chapter in this book is an individual story told from the point of view of one of four Chinese women or her daughter. This particular chapter, rich in both Chinese culture and metaphorical language, describes a girl who was brought up in China. The girl, Ying-Ying, was told not to express her wishes lest they be seen as selfish desires. She was admonished to be quiet and was taught to wait for the world to come to her. The result was that no one really knew her; the tragedy was that she raised her daughter the same way. Only as an adult did Ying-Ying realize that her only wish was "to be found."

To lead my students into the story and to assess their writing, I asked them to write a "showing" paragraph. To illustrate what "showing, not telling," is, I gave them several quotes from "The Moon Lady" that exemplify five characteristics of the showing technique.

Showing, not telling, is:

1. Figurative language

   "All these years I kept my true nature hidden, running along like a small shadow so nobody could catch me." (p. 67)

   "I rubbed out my face over the years washing away my pain, the same way carvings on stone are worn down by water." (p. 67)

2. Details

   "And so the stale heat still remained in the shadows behind the curtains, heating up the acrid smells of my chamber pot, seeping into my pillow, chafing the back of my neck and puffing up my cheeks, . . ." (p. 68)

3. Action

   (Ying-Ying's shadow) "When I shook my head, it shook its head. We flapped our arms. We raised one leg. I turned to walk away and it followed me. I turned back around quickly and it faced me. I lifted the bamboo mat to see if I could peel off my shadow, but it was under the mat, on the brick. I shrieked with delight at my shadow's own cleverness." (p. 72)

4. Strong action verbs

   "But they sounded evil, the way she hurled and spat the words out." (p. 77)

5. Adjectives, sensual details, dialogue

   "The water had turned a deep golden color, and then red, purple, and finally black. The sky had darkened and red lantern lights started to glow all over the lake." (p. 77)

Students then read several paragraphs from Rebekah Caplan's *Writers in Training* until all of them could distinguish between showing and telling details.[2] We also attempted "framed imitation" of the simple action paragraph (3, above) describing Ying-Ying's shadow. ("When I _______, it (he, she) _____________," and so forth). Finally, I gave them a telling sentence and asked them to develop it into a showing paragraph. I asked them to describe a time when they had felt left out or unknown. I also asked them to reflect on what they had learned from the incident they described. Because some of my students are limited-English proficient, in addition to having them brainstorm ideas, I also wrote a showing paragraph as a model. I then asked them to write their own showing paragraphs as a homework assignment.

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[1] Amy Tan, *The Joy Luck Club*. New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1989.

[2] Rebekah Caplan, *Writers in Training: A Guide to Developing a Composition Program*. Palo Alto: Dale Seymour Publications, 1984.

The following paragraph, written by Chris Welle, exemplifies the kind of writing many students produced.

I Felt Excluded Because No One Knew Me

> The first day in my new school, I desperately tried to be accepted into a group. Drastically, trying far too hard, I attempted to make my way into the popular "clicks," not letting them into my past, protecting it from the clever, attractive, and husky teenagers the same way a mother rodent hides her young from predators. I answered their questions the best way I could, hiding the real me, but knowing I was predestined to be in the group. Feeling a subtle pressure from the teenagers, I began to believe that they were toying with me. Finally, the time came for the word that would deliver me from the alleys of the disliked to the skyscrapers of the approved. I felt myself hurled off the tallest structure. I was rejected, quickly and surely. Finding out that popularity isn't the greatest thing in the world was a major fall in my life.

After I read through the showing paragraphs, I divided my students into hetergeneous groups that reflected different nationalities and writing proficiencies. To help students become acquainted, I had them interview each other in their groups and then share these introductions with the whole class. The groupings were successful: Often, gifted students would find themselves introducing students who had been in this country for only two or three years and were still struggling with the language.

As students became acquainted and began to realize the diversity of cultures within the classroom, I told them that we would be learning more about each other as we read literature from Asia, South Africa, and Latin America. I let them know that we would call on the "experts" in our class whose native cultures differ greatly from our own. The reason for learning was thus established.

Working with their showing paragraphs within their groups, students participated in read-arounds, underlining similes, metaphors, and other showing details. They performed any editing tasks they could, and they wrote notes in response to authors' reflections. The groups concluded this activity by choosing the paragraphs they liked best and reading them to the class.

Finally, we read "The Moon Lady" for the first time. In the beginning we read aloud, stopping often to comment on the story, the cultural differences it revealed, and the language used by the author. I then asked my students to finish the story silently and to jot down examples of language that appealed to them, as well as any cultural differences they noticed. This writing was later used as a basis for class discussion in which students read what they had written and their classmates responded. Students then did a quickwrite on the ideas and feelings suggested to them by the story. They shared these thoughts in their groups.

As a homework assignment, my students read the story a second time. I modeled the difference between factual, interpretive, and evaluative questions and asked the students to write their own interpretive questions for the story. As examples, I shared questions that I had about the story. I emphasized that these questions could be answered in several different ways and that we would use them to explore the meaning in the story. I also asked the students to keep a dialectical journal as they read through the story this time. I gave them a copy of the chart on the next page and asked them to choose from the story some quotes that they would like to think about. Although the chart provided them with only one example, we practiced with two or three more examples as a class before students began their own journals.

Before a class discussion following this assignment, I gave students time to collaborate with their groups. Those who were still having problems with their journals received help from those who had done the assignment with no difficulty. We then shared favorite quotes from the story and our reactions. Our class ended with a lively discussion using the interpretive questions that students had generated. Knowing that their answers couldn't be wrong, even the most reluctant students responded. My role in the discussion was merely to make sure that everyone had a chance to talk, to sum up what had been said, and occasionally to suggest looking for evidence in the story to establish the authenticity of a point of view.

Now that students were very familiar with the story, I gave them the following prompt:

> Write an essay in which you reflect on the many people who live within themselves, within their

> shadows. Begin with a specific instance or instances in which you did not voice your feelings or wishes. You may also wish to refer to details from "The Moon Lady" for other examples of someone not speaking out. Reflect on this very human behavior that is common to all of us. You might want to consider the effect on humanity if all people were very open about their wishes and desires, if all people let themselves be known. Remember, you are merely exploring your own ideas. You do not have to convince anyone that these ideas are *best* or *right*.

I also distributed the questions outlined below, which I told them were part of a chart they would use later for sharing and revising their essays. I suggested that they might want to use these questions as a guide for writing.

Sharing and revising

- Does the writer open by reflecting on what it means to be lost?
- Does the writer speak about a personal experience?
- Does the writer refer to Ying-Ying and describe how she became a lost soul whom no one really knows?
- Does the writer reflect on the idea that many people are unknown?
- Does the writer arrive at some new idea about how this situation affects the world?

Although most of my students were ready to write at this time, there was still evidence of confusion on a few faces. After I read them an essay that I had written to the prompt as a model, even my most reluctant writers were able to begin to write.

Sharing in small groups followed. Students reacted to each other's essays and discussed them using the sharing and revising chart. They then edited for complete sentences and correct grammar before finally rewriting. Jena Saldana's essay, which follows the suggested format, is an example of the successful reflective writing that most students were able to achieve.

Living in a Shadow

Shadows are only seen in the sun and are lost by the night, just like people. Some people feel so insecure about their own ideas that sometimes they're afraid of what others might think. So, they hide and hope to go unnoticed. Because of this we sometimes overlook some of the nicest, smartest and talented people. They play the role of someone else and not themselves.

I was like that once for a very long time. It began with the time I entered middle school and lasted through the seventh grade. I was quiet and afraid of people because they could hurt me so easily. I just about died whenever a teacher called on me for fear that I wouldn't give the correct answer. I never talked back to my friends and I did everything they told me to. It was pretty pathetic. And because I hid in my shadow, I was hurt and had to see others hurt also.

In "The Moon Lady," Ying-Ying felt that she had to hide her feelings and act like her mother wanted her to because that's the way she was expected to

Dialectical Journal

Quotation from text	*Response (What the text means)*	*Personal response (What I think of the idea)*	*Reflective response (What it says about the world)*
"We are lost, she and I, unseen and not seeing, unheard and not hearing, unknown by others." (p. 67)	This means that mother and daughter are only shadow figures. They are nothing. No one knows them.	There are probably a lot of people like this around me. That is scary!!	Everyone is involved in his or her own life in this world. People do not care enough.

> behave. In the Chinese culture, girls were very controlled while the boys were very carefree. This forced her to be a shadow and lose touch with her real self. Later, she realized that she had done this to her own daughter and it caused the same thing to happen. Both Ying-Ying and her daughter had drifted through life like shadows, unknown to others and even to themselves.
>
> Many people in this world can relate to Ying-Ying's and my own experiences and probably to many others who we will never know about. Maybe if people expressed themselves more, they'd discover that some people would be more considerate about their feelings. They should always speak up and stand up for what they believe. That way, maybe they could work on showing everybody their true nature and their dreams.
>
> Ideas and feelings should be shared because that's what communicating is all about. And without communication, we live our lives separately and lost, without recognition, like kittens lost from their mothers drifting helplessly along in life's shadow.

Because many of my students had seldom written more than a paragraph, I was delighted with the writing they did. Days full of close reading, brainstorming, quickwriting, short paragraphs, imitation, modeling, journals, paraphrasing, writing, sharing, and rewriting had achieved results that pleased both the students and me.

Adapting the Writing-as-Process Model to the Different Learning Styles in an ESL College Composition Classroom

By Bonita Nahoum Jaros
Instructor of ESL, Rancho Santiago College;
and Teacher/Consultant, UCI Writing Project

In the years that I have been involved in teaching writing as a process, I have been heartened to see that a large number of language arts and composition teachers, from the elementary school level to the university level, have embraced the concept and are incorporating it into their curricula. In addition, as more and more instructors become committed to the writing-as-process model and espouse some of the techniques that are natural to it, we find that textbooks are being written that emphasize writing across the curriculum, collaborative and cooperative learning, and intensive rather than extensive curricula. In other words, there is a realization that writing is not done in isolation, it is not done without thinking, and it is not a skill that exists for its own sake. Moreover, in practice, teaching a skill requires teaching a process; this is a more humane approach than simply assigning writing and forcing students to churn out hastily developed products.

In the college-level ESL composition classroom, all of these tenets become more complex because of the cultural dynamics involved. Not only do we need to include culture in the teaching of language but we must also be knowledgeable about the diverse cultural backgrounds that our students bring to our classrooms. That is, as ESL teachers, we must be aware of the languages spoken by students so that we may predict errors, and we must also be cognizant of the learning styles of students whose first language is not English so that we may help them become comfortable with writing and thinking techniques that may not be natural to them.

In addition, we know that language and culture are inseparable; and as we teach higher-level thinking and writing in English, we constantly overlay the complexity of the American thought process onto the already established and diverse thinking processes of other cultures. Therefore, the careful voyage through the writing process becomes even more delicate. As we go through each step of the process, we must constantly check that we have reached each cultural group. This approach requires a wide variety of activities at each stage.

It is well known that students in different cultural groups are taught to adapt to specific teaching and learning styles. For example, in many cultures the lecture mode is emphasized, and discussion is not encouraged. Other cultures promote peer activities but not large-group discussions. Still others are comfortable with group discussions. Although anyone can acquire the

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BONITA NAHOUM JAROS

ability to adapt to all learning styles, we must remember that the learning style in which one is trained may conflict with one's natural tendencies. This is as true of native speakers as it is of nonnative speakers. Therefore, not only must we be knowledgeable of the cultural groups in our classes, but we must also understand the importance of natural individual learning styles as well.

The chart on the next page illustrates a few activities I have used at different stages of the writing process that address the natural learning styles as categorized and described in the McCarthy model.[1] *Imaginative learners* like to discuss information; *analytic learners* like to think about ideas and concepts; *dynamic learners* like hands-on activities with little thinking time; and *common sense learners* need modeling and practical application. After a great deal of thought, I realized that the activities generated by the various steps of the writing process focus on all four learning styles. Thus, another reason the writing-as-process model is so effective is that it not only gives students practice writing multidraft papers for a variety of audiences and purposes but also exposes them to a variety of experiences that will expand their natural learning styles.

The activities in class serve as a foundation for outside tasks, since I spend only four hours per week with my composition students and cannot always assist them through all parts of the writing process in the classroom. Each day's segment may address only a piece of the writing process. For that reason, stable cooperative groups of four are formed the first week of class. It is vitally important to teach the students to monitor themselves and to take responsibility for following the group, since each group must work together outside of class as well as inside. It is also valuable to form ethnically mixed groups so that students from more verbal cultural groups may lead those who are not, students who are comfortable in writing multiple drafts are models for those who are not, and students with developed note-taking skills help those who lack those skills.

For individual feedback I require a learning log from each student for each class session. This log, together with a series of assessment techniques, keeps me abreast of each student's progress. Finally, students appreciate an informal conference hour that I hold once a week in a nonthreatening environment, such as the cafeteria, for conversation and discussion of their work. These elements make it possible for me to make each writing assignment progressively more complex without stress on the students. By the end of the semester, my ESL composition students understand domains of writing, point of view, audience, and the requirements of research. And they know how to revise and edit with ease.

To illustrate how the writing-as-process model addresses the varied learning styles of students in an ESL college composition classroom, I would like to share some of the techniques I use with the Langston Hughes short story "Thank You, Ma'am."[2] During the semester I use a variety of reading topics ranging from scientific articles to

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[1] See Bernice McCarthy, *The FourMat System: Teaching to Learning Styles with Right/Left Mode Techniques* (Revised edition). Barrington, Ill.: Excel, Inc., 1987. I am grateful to JoAnn Isken, Principal, Jefferson School, and Ken Knott, Assistant Principal, Lennox Middle School, for making me aware of this model.

[2] See Langston Hughes, *Thank You, Ma'am.* (Classic Short Stories Series). Mankato, Minn.: Creative Education, Inc., 1991.

The Writing Process and Natural Learning Styles

Writing process	*Activity*	*Natural learning styles*
Prewriting	Clustering Lecture Discussion Role-play (demonstration) Role-play in groups	Imaginative Analytic Imaginative Common sense Dynamic
Writing	Free-write first draft. Follow outline.	Dynamic Analytic
Sharing	Read to the class. Read in pairs or small groups. Listen to pieces.	Analytic Imaginative / dynamic Common sense
Revising	Model peer response groups. Peer response Fill in peer response sheet. Read responses / analyze.	Common sense Imaginative / dynamic Dynamic Analytic
Rewriting	Model Individual In pairs	Common sense Analytic / dynamic Imaginative
Editing	Model corrections / grammar exercises. Color-code errors—discuss. Make corrections individually. Group correction	Common sense Imaginative Analytic / dynamic Imaginative / dynamic
Evaluating	Class determines criteria in group discussion. Several possible criteria are offered. Instructor explains criteria. Peer evaluators	Imaginative Common sense Analytic Dynamic
Publishing	Papers are put on display or shared through a read-around.	Everyone enjoys a final product that is lauded.

literary works; I use "Thank You, Ma'am" to teach point of view because it addresses such issues as respect for elders, the concept of guilt, the way to thank a person, and raising children. Since these issues are viewed differently in different cultures, it is not always easy for students to understand the characters' points of view. This assignment requires students to substantiate their interpretations of a character's feelings with references to the text since they are not likely to share the character's feelings.

Prewriting activities include clustering the moral issues in the story *(imaginative)* and then categorizing the responses in a tree-branch outline diagram *(analytic)*. A small-group discussion *(imaginative)* about one or more of the issues follows. Each group decides which moral issue it finds the most interesting, and then each group member free-writes *(dynamic)* about those issues; e.g., punishment, stealing, showing gratitude. They share these writings, thus pooling their perspectives about the moral issue. This particular free-writing is not revised or edited. It is done to gain insight into reactions of individuals and the group to a particular issue. For example, one student might expect Roger to go to jail, but another student might be in favor of a verbal reprimand. The differences are discussed, but value judgments are not made.

For homework each group compiles helpful background information about the author, the setting, or the period of time in which the piece takes place *(analytic)*. Through their reading and research, students gain background information about a story which has little or no cultural link to them.

After first discussing and then presenting the background information and discussing it in a cooperative mode, the class will read the story out loud in groups. A comprehension and vocabulary check may indicate the need for a vocabulary or grammar lesson *(analytic)*, which is not extensive at this point. Each group then decides which character it will use for its study of point of view *(imaginative)*. Students have begun to formulate their own ideas about the issues, and now they have read the story. Using a dialectical journal *(imaginative)*, individuals can begin to pinpoint the feelings of the characters with supporting evidence from the text. They might also contrast the character's feelings with their own. If this is the first time a dialectical journal is used, it must be modeled very carefully. Shown below is an unedited excerpt from one student's dialectical journal.

An excellent follow-up activity is role-playing *(common sense)*. One person volunteers to play a particular character from "Thank You, Ma'am," and the rest of the group asks this character how he or she feels about one of the outlined issues. After this exercise is done, the class will analyze *(analytic)* the responses given by the students who role-played. This analysis must be based on information from the text. This exercise may be repeated in small groups, with different students handling different moral issues.

Now students are ready to do the first draft of the point-of-view piece, probably in the form of a letter to a friend *(dynamic)*. They've done a variety of prewriting and writing activities that appeal to those who learn best through discussion, lecture, modeling, and hands-on participation. Most learning styles have been addressed, and the issue of culture has been carefully delineated. After students write their point-of-view pieces, they share them in groups and conduct a peer revision

Dialectical Journal

Facts from the text (Louella's feelings)	**Reactions, observations, or deductions**
"Now here, take this ten dollars and buy yourself some blue suede shoes. And next time, do not make the mistake of latching onto my pocketbook nor nobody else's—because shoes got by devilish ways will burn your feet."	Although Louella did not want to punish Roger for what he did, she wanted to teach him that he never do it again. She thought that through generosity he would learn the lesson better than through punishment.

> *Not only do we need to include culture in the teaching of language but we must also be knowledgeable about the diverse cultural backgrounds of our students.*
>
> BONITA NAHOUM JAROS

following a clearly defined set of criteria *(imaginative/dynamic)* that include suggestions such as "Add information for clarity of point of view"; "Subtract information that is redundant"; and "Move parts for organization."

Before students edit their writing, I will review it and make comments. However, only when they feel it is ready to be edited will I permit them to do so. At that point I code the errors *(imaginative)* for editing as follows:

pink—run-on
orange—wrong verb form
green—wrong word class
yellow—spelling
blue—fragment
red—syntax

They know what each color stands for, and we practice the techniques for eliminating these types of errors. Most of the sentence-level errors in an ESL class include the following: wrong word forms, syntax problems, incorrect subordination or coordination, fragments and run-ons, incorrect verb forms, and spelling errors. It is rare that a student will commit all of these errors, but if that occurs, I will color-code the one or two types of errors whose elimination will improve the paper the most. Students then correct the highlighted errors individually and in small groups *(analytic/dynamic)*. By emphasizing depth of thought and meaning, I try to downplay the obsessive tendency of some ESL students to see "correctness" as the only important aspect of writing. I stress that everyone can attain correctness with enough editing, and I reinforce this belief by encouraging them to edit in groups and to learn from each other's strengths. They eventually come to realize that the evaluation includes fluency and form as well as correctness.

The time spent on all of these activities depends much on the nature of the class: on how much preparation students need for writing, how much grammatical explanation they require, how much revising and editing they need to do, and how much outside work they prepare. However, the final product is built on a firm foundation. No two classes are alike, but they all progress; and all students become committed to reading more and to following the writing-as-process model. When I talk to my students semesters later, they tell me that they are applying this model to every class; and even though they still make grammatical errors, they are able to read better, think more clearly, and write more meaningful pieces. In synthesizing the steps of the writing process with a knowledge of learning styles and cultures, I have found that all students become engaged in learning and maintain consistent improvement. This progress is what makes teaching ESL composition classes enriching.

AUTHOR'S NOTE: I would like to extend my warmest thanks to Bill Blake for helping me revise and edit this article.

Getting Off Track: Core Literature for All Students

By Mifanwy Patricia Kaiser
English Teacher and Department Chair, Costa Mesa High School, Newport-Mesa Unified School District;
and Teacher/Consultant, UCI Writing Project

and Michelle Lindfors
English Teacher, Costa Mesa High School,
Newport-Mesa Unified School District;
and Teacher/Consultant, UCI Writing Project

What educator would argue with this quotation from Robert Maynard Hutchins: "The best education for the best is the best education for the many"? The concept of equality in education is not only universally ascribed to but also perhaps most easily dealt with when left on the level of warm, fuzzy adages. The issue of tracking versus detracking is controversial. Regardless of whether the students labeled remedial are scheduled into classes geared toward a homogeneous ability level or are scheduled into the same classes as the students labeled advanced, they should all be taught a challenging curriculum. Remedial students should *not* be subjected to a monotonous stream of work sheets or grammar lessons.

When teachers talk about placing students, the teachers of advanced placement (AP) or honors students almost never talk about what their students *cannot* do. The students are spoken of in terms of what they *can* do. Conversely, when teachers talk about remedial students, they discuss and place those students according to what they *cannot* do but rarely talk about what their students *can* do. Labeling students advanced, honors, remedial, special education, or non-English proficient/limited-English proficient (NEP/LEP) invites teachers to expect no more or no less than the label conveys.

Recent research studies have shown that almost all heterogeneously grouped students make academic gains. A couple of years ago, we decided to see how well Hutchins' theory worked. What follows is the story of what happened when high school students in remedial and advanced placement classes were taught the same literature lessons. We told the students nothing of the meaning of any of the literature we studied but allowed them to negotiate meaning through reader-response activities and collaboration. Results from our project not only confirm Hutchins' theory but also suggest that the impact of this approach on students' self-esteem can be phenomenal.

Like all good things, this project evolved serendipitously. During the summer of 1986, we attended the California Literature Project Institute, where we were charged with designing a literature unit for our students. Patricia developed one for her class, composed of ninth through twelfth grade students with specific learning needs such as those provided for in the resource specialist program, special education, and ESL; and Michelle developed one for her advanced placement seniors. Never one to shy away from a challenge, Patricia wrote a lesson to teach her so-called remedial students the difficult poem "The Hollow Men" by T. S. Eliot.

In the fall, before beginning Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, Michelle borrowed Patricia's unit on "The Hollow Men" because both works have similar themes. The *Model Curriculum Standards* encourages teachers to adopt core literature for all students.[1] Our school was highly tracked, and the remedial English curriculum was, to say the least, very different from that for regular or advanced students. In spite of this disparity, when Michelle borrowed Patricia's lesson to use with her AP students, neither of us thought of the ramifications. But after we had taught the lesson and informally compared the final essays from both classes, we were nothing short of amazed at the similarities between the classes in the responses to the meaning of the work. Patricia's students may not have had the same command of words as Michelle's, but they were just as capable of understanding T. S. Eliot, thinking critically, and writing about "The Hollow Men" without the teacher explicating the poem for them. The results achieved from our students' writing are an eloquent argument for getting off track and for allowing *all* students access to a challenging curriculum.

A ninth grade student with a fifth grade reading score wrote as follows:

> I think the peom "The Hollow Men" means, men are walking around kind of not caring what's going on in life. The men's lives are just a meaningless wandering around the world. In stanza on Mr. Elliot talks about scarecrows. Mr. Elliot was trying to say that scarecrows are hollow because they do not have a heart or feelings toward anybody or anything. In stanza two Mr. Elliot is trying to say that they do not have any eyes, so they can not see. The scarecrow is wearing diguises. In stanza three Mr. Elliot is talking about lips that do not kiss and stone images. What he means by stone images that the hollow men are seeing shadows and lips that don't kiss, you show love when you kiss and lips when you do not kiss you are not showing love. In stanza four Mr. Elliot is talking about hollow men that are groping and avoiding speech. What Mr. Elliot means by groping and avoiding speech is when someone is groping they can not see, so the men can not see that they are hollow inside. They are trying to avoid speech so they will not have to show there feelings or love towards anybody. Stanza five means that life is meaningless if you do not have faith in yourself.

This first draft is, of course, unedited. In keeping with the writing process, the student cleaned up his errors for the final paper.

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[1] *Model Curriculum Standards, Grades Nine Through Twelve.* Sacramento: California Department of Education, 1985. (Out of print)

The self-esteem of all students is reinforced when they realize that they . . . have something important to talk or write about when studying difficult curriculum.

MIFANWY PATRICIA KAISER
AND MICHELLE LINDFORS

An LEP student from Patricia's class who had been in America for only two years wrote the following:

> In the poems, the hollow men were the stuffed men. They are quiet and meaningless, gesture without motion. The hollow men were dreaming of the death's in the twilight kingdom, and their were the hollow valley were they avoid speech and sightless. The death's causes by the shadow of the scarecrow, the scarecrow is hollow, had no feeling, blind, and helpless. To be hollow men mean quiet, meaningless, and gesture without motion.

In comparison are excerpts from two of Michelle's AP students. The first one states that:

> T. S. Eliot's poem, "The Hollow Men," contains a potent series of haunting images in which he analyzes the rather futile existence of a race that has lost it's humanistic qualities. Eliot pictures mankind suspended in an emotional vacuum, void of faith or animation. His people are numb, their surroundings are depressing (to say the least), and their lives are meaningless. In such a world, Eliot shows us that man ceases to exist.

And another follows:

> T. S. Eliot, in his melancholy poem, "The Hollow Men," describes men who have lost faith in themselves, in other men, and in a supreme being. They have become only empty, soul-less shells. The men described by T. S. Eliot in his poem, "The Hollow Men," are hollow both literally and symbolically. The literal hollowness is suggested by the poet's comparison of the men with scarecrows. Because the men lack faith, their souls as well as their bodies are symbolically hollow.

Both of Michelle's AP students cited the same images from the poem as Patricia's students had; and although the AP students expressed themselves more eloquently, all papers contain remarkably similar statements of meaning. This discovery excited us, and we began to talk about pursuing other collaborative lessons between the classes. That year our students also studied Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter* and Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman*.

Of course, teaching a complex poem like "The Hollow Men" to any group of students involves more than xeroxing the poem and assigning an essay. All our lessons grew out of reader-response theory, which allows for many distinct and even contradictory interpretations of the literature. A delicate balance exists between encouraging each reader to create his or her own personal meaning and asking the students to collaborate on discovering meaning. In keeping with the reader-response theory, we focused less on formalistic concerns, such as literary terminology or structure, and more on generating personal response and meaning.

The unit on "The Hollow Men" began by having students visualize the word *hollow* and list things that can be hollow. Next, we told the students the title of the poem and asked them to quickwrite their descriptions of hollow men. (A quickwrite is a brief response, prompted by a teacher, to a topic.) After each step in the lesson, students shared and collaborated on their ideas. After we had read the poem aloud and distributed copies, the students answered in their journals several open-ended questions adapted from Robert Probst's reader-response questions. (See "Dialogue with a Text," which appears elsewhere in this publication.) Then the class was divided into five groups, each of which focused on one of the sections in the poem. The task for all the groups was to create a title reflecting the meaning of the section, to defend their choice by citing evidence from each stanza, and prepare a dramatic reading of the stanza for the rest of the class. After the students had thought, written, and talked about the poem, we asked them to write an essay explaining the meaning.

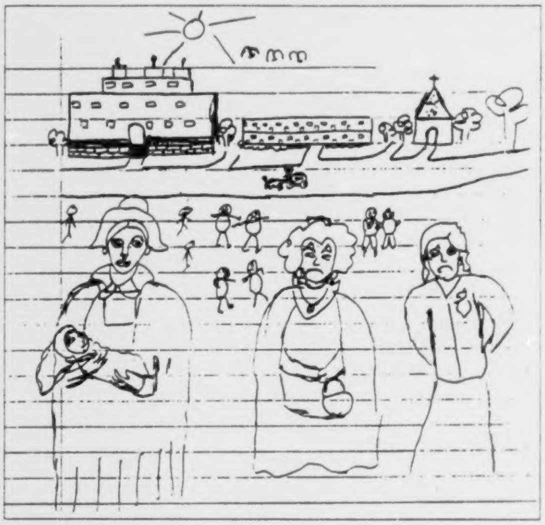
After this activity we decided to tackle a longer work, *The Scarlet Letter*. Michelle's students read the entire novel, including the introductory section, "The Custom-House"; but Patricia devised a budget tour for her students. This technique has proven successful in teaching difficult literature to less-prepared students. Students read a shortened version of the *original* work of art, not an easier version written by someone removed from the classroom. The *teacher* decides which material in the original work is not necessary for students to be able to comprehend the work of art. The beauty of the budget tour is that the student still uses the original work and is not singled out as needing the abridged version. The same activities to make the work meaningful that are used in studying the full-length sections are employed: reader-response activities, visualization, journal entries, scripting, understanding vocabulary in context, writing to learn, and jigsaw dramatic reading.

Although students read slightly different versions of *The Scarlet Letter*, the activities for both classes were the same. The students did interpretive drawings to show their understanding of the initial scene in which Hester is forced to stand on the scaffold in shame. They also wrote a series of interior monologues in which they pretended to be various characters (Hester, Dimmesdale, Chillingworth, or Pearl) during each of the four scaffold scenes. The students were asked to write interior monologues to demonstrate their grasp of the events and the meanings in the novel.

Another activity featured the writing of show, not tell, paragraphs about the characters, a technique we learned and refined with Rebekah Caplan at the UCI Writing Project Summer Institute. (See "A Training Program for Student Writers" by Rebekah Caplan, which appears elsewhere in this publication.) We made an interesting discovery with this activity. The following is a show, not tell, paragraph that one of Patricia's LEP students wrote about Pearl after he had read chapter six of the novel:

> She unfriendly. She had to live along and she had only mother she never take and look some children She aspect was imbued with a Spell of the infinite variety in one child the were many the children comperehend. She Smart so understanding child. the most people hate there looked at her. She make something right a mean people make all the children in this town eerie her then. She Don't have a friendy.

You will agree that the paragraph is almost unintelligible and that perhaps this student should not be working with *The Scarlet Letter*. However, when the student was asked to draw what he understood from listening to the reading of the chapter in which Hester stands on the scaffold in shame, notice how much information he understands, as shown in the illustration below.



When the student was asked to draw what he understood from listening to the reading of the chapter in which Hester stands on the scaffold in shame, notice how much information he understands.

Hester is standing with the child, a rosebush is beside the prison, the sun is shining, and people are jeering at Hester.

Hester is standing with the child, a rosebush is beside the prison, the sun is shining, and people are jeering at Hester.

At the conclusion of our study, we gave our students a variety of essay topics to choose from. Having been trained in the stages of the writing process as a part of the Writing Project, we guided our students through the writing of several drafts, allowing plenty of time for peer response and revision.

In one of the essay topics, the students were asked to identify who they thought was the greatest sinner in the novel. And again we received papers with remarkably similar ideas. We got varied responses: some thought Dimmesdale was the greatest sinner, and some thought Chillingworth was.

Excerpts from students' writing about Arthur Dimmesdale, first from Patricia's students and then from Michelle's follow:

> Arthur's sin is the greatest of the three because he didn't ask God to forgive him . . . His sin was also the greatest because he was untrue to himself and to others. An example of this is that in his sermon, he didn't come right out an tell the townspeople of his sin. He made it seem like everything was fine, when it wasn't.
>
> Then he watched her take her punishment and he did not tell the town's people he was the father. He was a leader and his responsibility was to preach about sin and guilt and while he was doing this he was actually lying to the towns people and himself and because of that and his guilt he put himself through a Hell on earth.

* * *

> "To the untrue man, the whole universe is false,—it is impalpable—it shrinks to nothing within his grasp" (p. 134). Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter* conveys the concept that those who lack honesty and truthfulness will suffer because of the falsehoods that their lives represent. Arthur Dimmsdale, a representative of God with basically good morals and intentions, succumbs to the worldly sin of adultery with Hester Prynne. Hester faces the ignominious ridicule of the townspeople, while the "man of God" conceals his guilt under the guise of his prestigious calling. The minister feels a deep sense of sorrow, and he suffers greatly from his tragic weakness, which is his inability to acknowledge his guilt in public. Additionally, Dimmesdale's Puritan values lead the minister to rationalize with himself concerning the importance of his position. He, therefore, compounds the original sin by adding dishonesty and hypocrisy.

Students' responses about Roger Chillingworth appear next. The first excerpt is from Patricia's student, followed by one from Michelle's:

> Rodgers sin was torcher and attented murder, and I feel that would be a greater sin than to have an afair. When Roger sinned he sinned, out of hateridness and he planned on taking someones life. In my eyes I feel that Rodgers sin was the greatest sin and that there was nothing wrong with an afair out of wedlock.

* * *

> The last of Hawthorne's sinners presented in his novel is Chillingworth. Hester's husband, the man supposedly the most wronged and sinned against, becomes the worst sinner. The mode of revenge he takes upon Dimmesdale is truly evil. So evil in Hawthorne's eyes, that his descriptions of Chillingworth often refer to Satan . . . . Chillingworth's sin is worse than that of Hester and Dimmesdale because theirs was merely a sin of passion, whereas his is utterly evil.

In the spring we decided to bring our classes together for a unit on Arthur Miller's *Death of a Salesman*, since our classrooms were next to each other and our classes were scheduled at the same time. All of the activities for this unit were done with the students in groups of four, two from Michelle's and two from Patricia's class.

We first asked our students to conduct an interview with their parents. We gave them questions that focused on the parent-child relationships and the American dream—themes that we wanted to pursue during our study of this tragedy. The students could tape or write the responses. We then presented a minilecture on the definition of tragedy and the tragic hero. Next, we distributed a list of homework questions designed to get students to think about the play, had the groups discuss them, and present their findings. The groups also adopted a character to analyze orally and in writing. After we had finished reading the play, we had the students come to school one evening to view the film and eat popcorn. By far the most popular project, aside from the eating of doughnuts on the final day, was the making of collages. The groups selected one of the themes from the play (illusion versus reality, fulfilled versus unfulfilled dreams, the American dream, or parent-child relationships) to portray in a collage.

The culminating writing project was an essay in which the students compared the characters in *Death of a Salesman* to those in either *The Scarlet Letter* or *Oedipus Rex*. And, again, we quote from students' papers, first from Patricia's student and then from Michelle's.

> Bif Loman is a tragic hero because he doesn't live up to what is expected of him by his father and this causes him much shame. He suffers as, he doesn't really know what his dreams for himself really are. But when he finds his dream his father has trouble accepting and understanding it, the fact that both he and his father are just a dime a dozen is hard for willy to accept. Bif stands up for what he believes by finally

> being honest with his family, I feel that he wanted to do this for a long time but he had to go through the shame and suffering first!

* * *

> Biff's act of shame or horror was his refusal to face reality after discovering his father's affair. He gave up on life, and continued to live in an dillusion. His lack of happiness and inability to hold down a job provoked and prolonged his suffering. He gained self-knowledge upon realizing the phony life he had been living. He was trying to be something he wasn't: a leader, a success. "I am not a leader of men, Willy, and neither are you" (p. 1342). His affirmation comes as a result of the recognition of his insatiable desire to conform to his father's image of him.

What did we learn from this classroom research? Our initial reservations about the hows and whys of tracking were reinforced. Patricia's students deserved and could handle a challenging curriculum; Michelle's more reserved students blossomed when they were not overshadowed by their more vocal classmates. NEP/LEP students perceive much more aurally than they can process into writing, and they can handle challenging works of literature. And, it goes without saying, the self-esteem of *all* students is reinforced when they realize that they do, in fact, have something important to talk and write about when studying difficult curriculum, whether it be in kindergarten or college.

Providing an Audience for ESL Students and a Reason to Write

By Carolyn Mendoza

Assistant Principal, Kennedy High School,
Anaheim Union High School District;
and Teacher/Consultant, UCI Writing Project

English-as-a-second-language (ESL) students have a wealth of experiences to share with native English speakers. One of the most interesting and most immediate experiences they can draw on and translate into a narrative is the story of their departure or their parents' departure from their homeland and their journey to the United States.

At the prewriting stage, we have a discussion about these students' experiences. Many of them have traveled extensively, seen other parts of the world, lived in cultures with different customs, and so forth. I point out to the ESL students that many Americans would love to meet and talk with them and find out where they came from because most Americans have little information about their country's most recent immigrants.

As a prewriting exercise, I tell the students that a whole book has been written about immigrants traveling to the United States; their experiences are also worth sharing. I then read a selection from *American Dreams: Lost and Found*, by Studs Terkel.[1] It is an account of Dora Rosenzweig, a Russian immigrant. Dora's story becomes the model for my students' own narratives.

After I read this excerpt from *American Dreams*, we discuss what Dora said and identify what we think would be interesting to United States citizens. Before we begin to write, I ask the students for suggestions about what would be discussed in the narrative in sequential order, and I write their responses on the chalkboard. For instance, we begin by asking questions that we believe people would most like to have answered:

1. How long ago did this event take place?
2. How did you learn that you would be moving?
3. What was your life like before you left?
4. How did you actually escape or move?
5. Whom did you travel with?
6. What was your travel experience like?
7. Were there any problems or exciting experiences?

Next, I tell the students to write only what they feel comfortable with sharing and to give as accurate an account as they can so that their audience can picture their experiences. I also tell them that only I will know the authors' true identities. To provide some structure for their reminiscences, I ask the students to write about their family life first, followed by their traveling and immigration experiences, and finally how they feel about life in the United States.

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[1] Studs Terkel, *American Dreams: Lost and Found*. New York: Pantheon Books, 1980.

Because my students already have a wealth of memories to tap in telling their stories, they can focus less on what they want to say and put their energy into how they will say it. Providing an interested audience for them—a classmate at school, new neighbor, supportive teacher—and a topic they have deep feelings about motivates them to communicate as clearly and descriptively as they are able. Once they relate their experiences on paper in this new language, they can read them aloud in small groups or work individually with the teacher to make any necessary corrections. A sample of one of my student's papers follows:

Moving

It has been two years since this happened two years-seven hundred thirty days in a rather long time. In fact, for most people, things that happened two years ago would have faded out from their memories. But I can still remember things that happened to me two years ago so well, so clearly. Of course, it did not mean that I have a better memory, but it is because of things themselves that were big enough to change my whole life and that I can never forget.

It was an early cold morning in March of 1979 when I was waken up by my mother to prepare my luggage. I was leaving home, taking a journey that no one would know how long, how far and how dangerous to look for freedom. Since this would were formed, so many people had struggle, killed one another for the sake of freedom. What an abstract noun. it was, and now, for the sake of it, I was leaving my lovely home, my lovely folks for an unknow day to return. Thinking of this, tears filled my eyes, and the past came to my mind.

Before the communists take over of South Vietnam in April 1975 my father own a prospersons factory, making and sometimes exporting picture frames to the United States. Everything was going on so well that didn't need to worry about our living, we didn't even need to worry about the borring war that had been lasted for so long time. Everything seemed so brilliant. However, thing were changed greatly after the communits came to the South from the North. Private commerce, industries were prohibitt doing things in one's own way was no move allowed. Wearing fashioned dresses was warned by the Communists. In short there was no more individual freedom, no more human right. More seriously, food was not enough for the people, medicines were stopped to import. No food no medicines the whole country was put into a terrible condition. Consequently people began to seek ways to saves lives. The most common way was to flue the poor county by boats. Boat people were produced acodingly. The misseries of "Boat people" had been heard for so long. They might lost their lives on their ways of escape, they might meet the Thailand pirates and be robbed or killed by then on their way to look for freedom they might be.

Now, soon it came to my turn to be a "Boat people". I wonder it was worth while or not. For this fleeing the country, my family had paid ten ounces to communist government (approximately 4000 US. dollar by that time). and the priceless parting of family. (For some reasons, beside my brother and I, the rest my family had to stay in Saigon, temporarily I wished). Furthermore we didn't know when this escape would be succussful or not. We might lost our lives if it failed.

At five o'clock, my brother and I cam to the bus station to wait for the bus that would bring us down to Bak Lieu, a southern province in Vietnam and the boat that we was going to embark was suppose to park there.

Finally we came to Bak Lieu and then trans ferry to Camau the southern most port. It has about twelve o'clock mid night when we boarded on the boat names Phuoc An-meaning happiness and safety. From that moment on, I had left my Mom, my dad, and my yougest brother my ralatives, my friends, my country, my everythings!

The boat was a little old and fragile boat. It's unbelievable, a boat of 25 yards long and 10 yards wide carrying more than three hundred fifty people. It was really crowded on the boat. people were jammed together like sardines.

The boat began to sail for our supposed destination Malaysia at about one o'clock. The first day of our journey was uneventful. The sea was as calm as the mirror, therefore, it did not seem much trouble in our trip so far. However, in the second day when the unexperienced captain declared that we had lost our way after reading at the international water-way. It's hard to imagine how it was like to lose one's way in the ocean. It was dangerous to sail without knowing wehere one was going. Misfortune never came singly. At noon time, we saw three ships were approaching

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AUTHOR'S NOTE: "Moving" is an unedited first draft. The writer was at the 2.0—4.0 reading level. I would recommend this assignment only for ESL students whose English proficiency is at the second through fourth grade level or above and whose reading proficiency is equal to or better than second through the fourth grade.

us, we thought they might be our savior. Unfortunately they were not saviors but killers. They were the barbarous Pirate of Thailand. When their ships came close to our little boat, about ten of them just jumped over our boat with blunt lornibes axes and began their search for valuables. Of course, by the means of robbing. After a few hours searching, these beastly pirates finally left with gabs of watches, golds, dollars, etc. In fact, we were lucky that we were not killed by them. and the women on the boat were not raped by them. This had to be God's help.

The next day, Good luck came to us, we met another boat which was on it way to Malaysia too. With the gruidernce of this boat, we were came to the region of Malaysia. When were hanging around there, a Malaysian naval ship appeared and the soldiers ordered us that we could not land on the Malaysian territory, but they hinted us that if our boat could bribe them with a cartain amount of money, they might help us.

After satisfying their demand, we were at last allowed to land on an island names Panang of Malaysia. This was the fourth night of our journey. And these four days journey were at last ended.

After living in the small island of Panang for a week, we were transferred to the famous refugee Camp Bidong where thousand of refugees were get there.

Thus our new living as refugees began. In Bidong, we received such as rice, canned food, and water from the United Nation High Commissioner for Refugees. Meanwhile, we were to make procedures so that we could be resettled down in a third country.

Fortunately, our application for resettlement in the U.S. was accepted by the U.S. Governement. Consequently, we came to the United States in August 1979 after four months living in Malaysia.

From Vietnam to Malaysia, and from Malaysia to the U.S. it was really big move in my life, it was no wonder it had rooted in my memories.

Diem
May 1, 1981

Although Diem's story is clearly deficient in its correctness, it is one of the most fluent pieces of writing that she produced all semester. Because she had an important story to tell and an audience to write to, she truly searched her memory (and the dictionary) to find the English words to convey the dramatic events of her flight from Vietnam. Her story and the many others like it by her classmates are starting points—a way to make writing in English meaningful for ESL students.

Domains of Writing

Teaching the Domains of Writing

By Nancy McHugh
Former Director, Writing Competencies,
Los Angeles Unified School District

Dividing the "universe of discourse" into domains is not new. Traditionally, there have been at least three domains in the curriculum: descriptive, narrative, and expository writing. However, until recently, the widespread practice had been for teachers in the elementary grades to concentrate on *creative* writing (mainly imaginative/narrative writing) and for teachers in the secondary grades to emphasize expository writing almost to the exclusion of other domains.

The Los Angeles Unified School District reintroduced the broad concept of domains in writing in 1976 when it printed and distributed a description of its composition program and suggested four domains: sensory/descriptive, imaginative/narrative, practical/informative, and analytical/expository. Several theories were behind this move. One was that students do better in one domain than in another; therefore, the curriculum should have balance to provide equal opportunity for success for all students, regardless of their abilities, and plans for careers or continuing education. Another theory was that, although the domains are not totally discrete (indeed, they often blend one into the other), each has a place in writing/thinking development; and all are necessary for competent writing. With the most difficult expository task, a person probably uses all four domains to develop a theme. Another theory for using the four domains was that, although any mode can probably be used in any domain (poem as description, as narrative, as information, as analysis), working in separate domains encourages the teacher to use a wide variety of modes and audiences. A teacher may plan lessons exclusive to one domain at a time (a domain as a unit) and explore the variety of modes within that domain (sensory/descriptive domain: journal entries, tone

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poems, informal essays, letters, monologues, and so forth); or a teacher may choose to work with a theme or an experience and move from domain to domain and mode to mode crafting communication for a variety of audiences and purposes. Preplanning is essential, even though the teacher may choose to follow up an in-class lead and deviate from the plans occasionally.

Description of the Four Domains of Writing

The four domains are categories for defining somewhat exclusive purposes of writing. Part of writing competence is having a clear concept of the intent for the writing, including audience, and being able to organize in the mode (form) that best fits that intention. In the early grades the teacher may want to select the mode best suited for the domain and writing task. In the upper grades the teacher may want to encourage students to select the mode that seems most reasonable, perhaps providing a variety from which to choose. For example, after a prewriting exercise of listening to a record, the students may want to express their feelings about the experience. They will be using the sensory/descriptive domain. The students may be assigned a word poem or a paragraph, or they may be asked to express their feelings, and a number of ways might be suggested: Dear Diary, a word poem, haiku, a letter to a friend, and so forth.

The easiest of the four domains in writing is sensory/descriptive because it deals with the concrete. In this domain a student tries to present a picture in words, one so vivid that the reader or listener can recapture many of the same perceptions and feelings that the writer has had. The writer draws on all the senses to capture this picture of a person, place, or object. In this domain student writers must focus and sharpen their powers of perception and ability to choose precise words.

A second domain is imaginative/narrative (creative) writing in which the writer's main intent is to tell a story—sometimes real, sometimes imaginary. The forms may range widely, but the main idea is to tell what happens. In this domain student writers build on the first domain in that they must put descriptive detail into a time/order frame. Students learn ordering, transition, balance, suspense, climax, beginnings, and endings. This domain requires students to become more adept in using verb forms.

> *To use language, as language, is to be human; to use it with kindness, grace, and dignity is to be humane.*
>
> ALBERT UPTON

In the third domain, practical/informative, students are required to provide clear information; often the writing in this domain takes the form of what might be considered social and business correspondence; for example, letters, memorandums, directions, and notes. The main intent is for the writer to present information without much analysis or explanation. Working in this domain, students learn to give attention to detail, accuracy, clarity and appropriateness of tone, and mastery of forms like the letter.

A fourth domain is analytical/expository, which is the most difficult because it is the most abstract. In this domain the intention is to analyze, explain, persuade, and influence. The writers tell why and how about a subject. They borrow from the other three domains to make their points, and they emphasize organization and development.

Intent and Suggested Modes of Each Domain

The chart on the next page identifies the intent of each domain and suggests possible modes of writing within the domains.

Note that the same prewriting experience may be used as the stimulus for a variety of exercises in the domains. For example, after popping corn, one may describe in a variety of modes, explain the process, write advertisements, explain popcorn's origin in a folk tale, analyze the various uses of popcorn, or attack or defend it as a food.

A Plan to Introduce the Domains of Writing

Depending on your students' needs and the objectives of your course, you may want to spend from a few days to several weeks on each of the four domains. Provided below is a five-day plan to introduce the domains of writing to your students:

Objectives: Students will be able to awaken their senses, use clustering to elicit language, produce

Sensory/ Descriptive	Imaginative/ Narrative	Practical/ Informative	Analytical/ Expository
Intent: to describe in vivid sensory detail; to express individual feelings	**Intent: to tell what happens, real or imaginary; to put in a time sequence**	**Intent: to present basic information clearly**	**Intent: to explain, analyze, persuade**
Possible modes: • Journal entry • Diary entry • Personal letter • Personal essay • Poem (haiku, diamante,[1] cinquain, catalogue, prose poem, acrostic, and many others) • Monologue • Dialogue • Advertising copy • Character sketches	*Possible modes:* • Anecdotes • Limericks • Diary entries (fictional and real) • Captions to cartoons, pictures • Dialogues • Monologues • Scripts • Capsule stories (outline for plot or reconstruction of a cartoon strip) • Biographical and autobiographical sketches • Vignettes • Short stories • Folk tales • Myths • Allegories • Ballads and other poetic forms (story emphasis)	*Possible modes:* • Postcard message • Friendly notes of various kinds (invitation, thank you, acknowledgment of gift, and so forth) • Lecture/class notes • Memorandum • Directions/steps in a process • Self-evaluation statements • Commercials • News report • Accident report • Business letters (complaint, order, request for information, and so forth) • Application • Summary • Precis • Scientific abstract • Encyclopedia paragraphs	*Possible modes:* • Single paragraph/topic sentence plus support • Editorial • Little theme (three paragraphs) • Letter to editor • Speech • Dialogue to persuade • Reviews and reports • Poems (to persuade or analyze, make analogies) • Multiparagraph themes (describe/conclude; narrate/conclude; analyze/conclude; analyze/persuade; define, classify, defend a judgment, interpret literature) • Library/research paper

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[1] A diamante is a seven-line poem written in the shape of a diamond. The form of the poem is as follows: one noun, two adjectives, three participles, four words that form a phrase, three participles, two adjectives, and one noun.

Part of writing competence is having a clear concept of the intent for the writing, including audience, and being able to organize in the mode (form) that best fits that intention.

NANCY McHUGH

metaphoric description, create poetic forms, fashion commercials/advertisements, form interview questions, vary sentences, write exposition.

Materials and equipment: Popcorn or other suitable sense stimulus, paper and pen, chalkboard, overhead projector.

Prewriting: Popcorn (if possible, popped in class) is sampled by students, who examine it minutely and cluster all of their responses. Students share clusters (in groups, orally, on chalkboard). These experiences and ideas form the basis for later writing. (For more suggestions on using popcorn in a prewriting exercise, see Sue Rader Willett's practical idea, which appears in "The Process" section of this book.)

Composing skills: Students write two or three of their cluster ideas in complete sentences and check each other's work. The teacher shows them how to transform these sentences into metaphoric statements: The popcorn is white = The popcorn is as white as cotton puffs. The teacher also reviews the form for a diamante or cinquain. Subsequent to later assignments, the teacher reviews the format and special rules for a commercial or advertisement, a descriptive essay, an interview, and an expository essay.

Writing Task 1: (Differentiated) Choose one or more of the following to try:

1. Write another of your cluster ideas as a metaphoric statement.
2. Write several of your ideas in metaphoric statements, and put them together to form a catalogue poem.
3. Write a cinquain or diamante, including one of your metaphors in it.

Editing and evaluation: Students share their work in pairs or small groups, making suggestions for revision or corrections. The focus is on "help" and "appreciation," not "criticism."

Extension activities:[2] (To be used over the next three or four days, depending on the nature of the class):

Sensory/Descriptive

1. Expand your original clustered ideas into a multiparagraph sensory/description. Describe popcorn before, during, and after popping it. Try to involve as many senses as possible in your description. Try to include a few metaphors as well.

   NOTE: The teacher may present a sentence-combining exercise as a composing skill prior to this exercise or the next. Make your writing so vivid that your reader can see, smell, hear, and taste the popcorn.

Imaginative/Narrative

2. Think of a memory associated with popcorn. It could involve sitting in a movie theater or stringing popcorn on a Christmas tree or whatever event comes to mind. Remember where you were, who you were with, and how you felt. Then, write a narrative account of your popcorn memory.

Practical/Informative

3. Create a set of instructions for how to make popcorn. Make your step-by-step process so clear that a reader following your directions will be able to make popcorn.

Analytical/Expository

4. Persuade a friend either to eat the movie-theater style popcorn, which is drenched in calories, or to try one of the new light-calorie varieties. Anticipate that your readers may prefer the other style of popcorn, and give logical reasons to overcome objections they might have. Write your persuasive paper in the form of a friendly letter and use a tone suited to your audience.

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[2] These activities were based on ideas provided by Kathy Schultheis, Cadre II, Writing Competence Project, Carver Junior High School, Los Angeles Unified School District.

Writing Assignments in Each Domain

The following are descriptions of writing assignments that are specifically focused on each of the four domains. You may use these as points of departure to develop your own lesson plans.

Sensory/Descriptive Domain

Observing and Organizing Details

OBJECTIVES

1. Students will be able to sharpen their senses and deepen their sensitivities to sensory impressions.
2. Students will be able to write vivid, specific, creative sentences.
3. Students will be able to use figurative language.
4. Students will be able to write effective, coherent, organized descriptions.

MATERIALS

1. Holiday cards
2. Paintings or photographs

PREWRITING ACTIVITIES

1. The teacher will present several greeting cards and ask each student to select a card.
2. The students will look carefully at the picture on their cards and concentrate on remembering as many details as they can.
3. Each student will cluster as many details of his or her picture as possible in one minute without looking at the picture.
4. The students will write titles for their pictures based on the details they have created.
5. The teacher will help students to state in a sentence the main impression that they received from the picture and ask them to develop it with the specific details from the cluster.

COMPOSING SKILLS

1. Make use of descriptive words. Describe sensations of feeling, hearing, seeing, smelling, or tasting.

   Copy each adjective and after each write at least one noun that completes a picture.

   Example: *Blazing fire, blazing furnace, blazing sun*

   bitter
   buzzing
   clanging
   dazzling
   gritty
   moist
   roaring
   rough
   rushing
   sharp
   tart
   whizzing

2. Use words as nouns and adjectives. Write one sentence using the word as a noun and another as an adjective.

   Example: *Flower*

   Noun—My favorite *flower* is the lilac.

   Adjective—Dad exhibits lilacs in the *flower* show.

   fruit
   silver
   house
   winter
   guest
   song
   tree
   program
   egg
   dress

3. Make a comparison: Compare things which are not really alike, recognizing one similarity between two basically unlike objects or ideas.
   a. Students will work in small groups of three or four. They will examine all the cards and identify at least a major impression and the details which evoke it for each card.
   b. The cards will be circulated until each group gets a new set to work with.
   c. As students view cards, they will respond by pointing out similarities they see between the object illustrated and something else.
   d. Students write a simile or metaphor about a holiday card.
4. Review elements of complete sentences.

WRITING TASK

Write an interesting paragraph in which you discuss your painting or photograph in close detail. Try to make the reader (your audience is a pen pal) see your painting or picture as vividly as possible and feel what you feel for it. You should write complete sentences and also vary your sentence structure to create interest.

EDITING PLANS

Students exchange papers and read them aloud in small groups. They will make needed corrections.

EVALUATION

Teacher selects examples and duplicates them. Students are to underline the phrase(s) expressing the main impression in each paragraph and to discuss whether or not there are enough supporting details and whether any of the details do not support the main idea.

EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

Students create their own greeting cards and write a poem based on their experience with sensory impressions: haiku, acrostic verse, or starters.

Imaginative/Narrative Domain

Point of View

OBJECTIVE

Students will be able to narrate an imaginary experience using the voice of a person.

MATERIALS

Chapter Three in John Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath*, a chapter devoted entirely to a turtle that makes a torturous crossing of a main highway, during which it is flipped like tiddledywinks after a pickup truck runs over the edge of its shell

PREWRITING ACTIVITIES

1. Using cartoons, pictures, poems, and so forth about turtles, make observations and discuss turtles.
2. Read orally Chapter Three of *The Grapes of Wrath*.
3. Discuss the changes that would have to be made in the story if it were told from a different point of view; e.g., the turtle's.
4. Discuss possible points of view.

WRITING TASK/COMPOSING SKILLS

First, choose one of the following to cross a highway as the turtle had to do:

blind man
puppy
drunk
chicken
child
tarantula
snake
boy scout and old lady
a person or animal of your choosing

Then choose one of the following to come down the highway and confront the one you chose above:

Hell's Angels
Marine Corps Band
moving van
pickup truck
a group or vehicle of your choosing

Then, using the voice of one of the participants, describe the trip across the highway.

EXTENSION ACTIVITIES/EVALUATION

With sound effects record the good papers on tape.

EVALUATION

Teacher reads final drafts holistically. (See the "Evaluation" section of this book for a discussion of holistic scoring.)

EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

Those who wish may read their stories to the entire class.

Practical/Informative Domain

Balloon Experiment

OBJECTIVES

1. Students will be able to address postcards.
2. Students will be able to write simple, clear, and concise directions.
3. Students will be able to use map and measuring skills.
4. Students will be able to draw logical conclusions from given facts.
5. Students will experience a "space" launching.

MATERIALS

1. Postcards, pens, stamps
2. Maps of California
3. Balloons (ordinary rubber balloons), string
4. Helium

PREWRITING ACTIVITIES

1. Class discusses space launchings, lighter-than-air aircraft, the properties of gases, and the properties of helium.
2. Students are each assigned to bring to school a postcard and stamp. Further, they are told that if they fulfill the assignment, a surprise will await them.
3. At the next class meeting, the surprise, the balloon experiment, is revealed and discussed.

COMPOSING SKILLS

1. The teacher presents instructions on how to address a postcard.
2. The teacher reviews sentence and paragraph structure.
3. The teacher reviews the development of a paragraph by successive steps.
4. The teacher reviews the necessity to write clear and complete sentences.
5. The teacher stresses the necessity to use correct forms in addressing and writing postcards.

WRITING TASK

Write your address in the proper space on the postcard, and put a postage stamp on the card. Using an appropriate salutation, write a message on the postcard to the person who will find it. In your message, tell this person that you are doing an experiment for your physical science class; therefore, you are requesting that this person first write on the postcard the names of the city and cross streets where the postcard was found and, secondly, to drop the postcard in the nearest mailbox. Use an appropriate complimentary close and sign your name.

EDITING PLANS

Teacher will edit the rough drafts of the messages (before the messages are written on the postcards).

EVALUATION

Using a rubric, the student and then the teacher will evaluate the completed postcard. (See the "Evaluation" section of this book for suggestions.)

EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

Punch holes in the postcards and fill the balloons with helium. Then attach two or three helium-filled balloons to the postcards. A month later, most of the postcards should have been returned, depending on

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climatic factors. Then compile a list of the places where the postcards were found. The students are assigned to locate these places on the map, to measure the distance each balloon traveled, and perhaps to write a complete report of the experiment.

Analytical/Expository Domain

A Letter to Throckmorton (U.S. History)

OBJECTIVES

1. Students will be able to formulate explanations and a rationale for the American Revolution.
2. Students will be able to organize a friendly letter.
3. Students will be able to develop logical sequence in written arguments.
4. Students will be able to analyze historic events from the perspective of the eighteenth century.

MATERIALS

1. Any good U.S. history textbook
2. Copy of fictitious letter from a former teenage classmate in England

PREWRITING ACTIVITIES

With readings, discussions, and lectures, the teacher and students explore in depth the causes and events of the Revolutionary War period.

COMPOSING SKILLS

The teacher and students review the form for a friendly letter.

WRITING TASK

Pretend you are a young person in the colonies about 1776, just after the Declaration of Independence was issued. You still remember your good friend, Throckmorton Algire, with whom you went to school in London before you and your parents came to the New World. Throckmorton has written to you that he is surprised that the colonies are now in open rebellion against King George; Throckmorton is sure it is treason. And he is confused about the reasons why such a rebellion developed. In a recent letter to you, he asked you these questions: "Do you think such a treasonous thing as the Declaration of Independence is defensible?" and "Who will win this war?"

Read Throckmorton's letter carefully and write back to him.

Keep in mind that Throckmorton gets news from a great distance and that his letter indicates that almost everyone in England thinks of the "patriots" as traitors. You will need to explain carefully and logically how the current rebellion developed. You should include facts and your own opinion to help your friend understand both the sequence of events and the prevailing colonial spirit.

EDITING PLANS

Students may check each other's letters for facts, tone, and letter form.

EVALUATION

Teacher develops a rubric for correctness of letter form, logicalness and completeness of both facts and concepts, and perception of the prevailing sentiments of eighteenth century America.

EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

Without identifying writers, teacher chooses especially effective and ineffective letters and reads them to the class (ineffective first). Then the class votes on whether or not their views would have been changed if they had been Throckmorton. If possible, the teacher should read letters from a different class to avoid embarrassment of authors.

Providing students with practice in all four domains of writing will enable them to hone specific writing skills (use of concrete diction and figurative language, sequencing, transition, construction of a logical argument, and so forth) and make them aware of their options as writers. Then, in the future, the students can consciously integrate elements from the different domains to suit their purpose and audience.

Practical Ideas for Teaching the Domains of Writing

Expanding the Different Domains of Writing

By Julie Simpson

English Teacher, Sunny Hills High School,
Fullerton Joint Union High School District;
and Teacher/Consultant, UCI Writing Project

In designing the first direct writing assessment, California educators chose a paradigm of domains of writing based on James Moffett's *Active Voice: A Writing Program Across the Curriculum.*[1] Acknowledging that one kind of writing uses rhetorical devices from other types, the developers of the writing assessments selected 11 specific types of writing to be tested, dividing them into eight types at grade eight and eight at grade ten.

Chart A, "Writing Types," on the next page identifies 11 types of writing and demonstrates how they overlap the four general domains that Nancy McHugh described in her article titled "Teaching the Domains of Writing."

All types of writing use descriptive techniques—either to create vivid sensory details that paint a picture in words or to report information clearly and with accurate detail. Thus, it is important to sequence activities to provide a variety of writing lessons and to present a scaffold of writing instruction to facilitate skill building and carryover of concepts from one kind of writing to another.

Chart B, "Suggested Writing Topics," points out some of the overlapping features between and among types and suggests some writing topics for a variety of classroom projects. Topics are included for a literature lesson on *Little Red Riding Hood*, an exercise on reading maps, and a U.S. history lesson on the Clay Compromise of 1850.

The scaffolding for the activities in a literature lesson for *Little Red Riding Hood* appears in Chart C, "Scaffolding."

Because writing is also a part of the mathematics standards, students should be provided with a variety of writing experiences at various levels of instruction in mathematics. Open-ended questions probably fit most readily into these categories: Report of Information, Problem Solution, and Interpretation. Working to create mathematics situations to write about, a teacher might try to:

- Give a problem to a student to explain over the telephone to a friend. (Report of Information)
- Ask students to write a set of step-by-step instructions for drawing a geometric figure. (Report of Information)
- Ask students to create a real-life mathematics problem (buying something on credit or figuring measurements to build something). They write the information as a word problem, write the formula for solving it, and write an explanation of how to arrive at the solution. (Problem Solution)
- Present a word problem that requires students to make inferences to solve. Students write an explanation of what they have to know to be able to solve the problem. (Interpretation)

Providing students with practice in all types of writing within various content areas will expand their writing repertoire and help them to see how learning is integrated.

EDITOR'S NOTE: The domains in this article were from the California Learning Assessment System (CLAS), which developed and drew on projects and advice from members of the California Writing Projects and California Literature Projects.

[1] James Moffett. *Active Voice: A Writing Program Across the Curriculum* (Second edition). Portsmouth, N.H.: Boynton Cook Publishers, Inc., 1992.

Chart A. Writing Types

Los Angeles Unified School District's *Domains of Writing*	*Story*	*Autobiographical Incident*	*Firsthand Biography Sketch*	*Observational Writing*	*Report of Information*	*Problem Solution*	*Speculation*	*Interpretation*	*Reflection*	*Controversial Issue*	*Evaluation*
Sensory/Descriptive • Use vivid sensory detail.	X	X	X	X	X				X	X	X
• Portray individual perspective.	X	X	X	X			X	X	X	X	
Imaginative/Narrative • Tell what happens.	X	X	X	X	X						
• Order events in a time sequence.	X	X	X	X	X				X		
Practical/Informative • Report information clearly.			X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X
• Provide accurate details.			X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X
Analytical/Expository • Explain clearly.						X	X	X	X	X	X
• Persuade.						X	X	X	X	X	X
• Analyze.						X	X	X	X	X	X

Chart B. Suggested Writing Topics

Type	*Features*	Little Red Riding Hood *topics*	*Map-reading topics*	*Clay Compromise topics*
Story	Narrate a well-told story of a particular incident in the writer's life: • Use first-person point of view. • Use vivid sensory details to portray the incident. • Include people moving, speaking, and acting. • Order events logically. • Create tension to sustain interest. • Include significance to writer.	Retell the story of *Little Red Riding Hood* from the grandmother's point of view.		
Autobiographical Incident	Narrate a fictional event and provide: • A clear beginning, middle, and end • Conflict that motivates a character into action • Character development from dialogue, action, and comments from others • Vivid sensory detail to establish tone, setting, and motivation • Plot elements that fit together logically, even in fantasy • A story that has a logical turning point, or climax	Write about an incident when you learned that the world is not as ideal as you had assumed. Write the story of this incident and your feelings as the events unfolded.	Describe an incident when you became lost trying to get somewhere. Write the story of that incident and your feelings as the events unfolded.	Write about an incident when you had to compromise. Include enough details to show what the problem was and how the compromise solved the problem.
Firsthand Biographical Sketch	Portray a particular personality and physical traits through incidents and description: • Show the person through action, dialogue, and comments from others. • Use vivid sensory details. • Select details to show the writer's attitude toward the subject (not just a catalogue of statistics). • Tie incidents and description together logically.	Write a sketch of one of your grandparents who is special to you. Include several incidents to show your reader what is special about this person. Be sure to let the reader know why this person is important in your life.		
Observational Writing	Re-create accurately a scene or situation that the writer observed as a bystander: • Present the recalled situation in a specific time and place. • Observe details vividly, enabling the reader to see through the writer's eyes. • Focus on the other subject, although the scene is presented from the writer's perspective. • Disclose significance or impact of the scene explicitly or implicitly.	Some people try to be something they are not just to get their own way (a "wolf"). Write about an incident you observed but were not directly involved in when someone did something phony to get his or her way.		

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Chart B. Suggested Writing Topics (Continued)

Type	*Features*	Little Red Riding Hood *topics*	*Map-reading topics*	*Clay Compromise topics*
Report of Information	Arrange and report information clearly and logically: • Control details from a clear perspective. • Describe with physical detail. • Use a variety of means to elaborate on a mass of factual information. • Offer details in logical order. • Establish a tone of authority.	Write a news article that reports the incident between Little Red Riding Hood, the wolf, and Grandma. Be sure to include a headline.	Explain a set of directions clearly enough to get a friend without a map from one place to another. He or she does not want to have to ask again for help.	Define *compromise*. Explain the compromises that were involved in Clay's Compromise.
Problem Solution	Identify a problem, propose a solution, and convince the reader to accept the proposition: • Describe the problem clearly enough to establish its need for solution. • Present (directly or indirectly) several alternatives. • Analyze why the proposed solution is the most plausible one. • Order the argument logically. • Establish an authoritative, convincing tone.	Plan an updated film of *Little Red Riding Hood*, choosing between science fiction, a monster fantasy, a punk opera, or a musical from the 1950s. Consider each alternative, choose the one that will sell the best, and write a presentation arguing for your choice.		Imagine you are a senator in 1850, representing Kentucky. What forces would sway you in favor of Clay's Compromise? What would lead you to oppose that plan? How would you vote?
Speculation	Present a plausible explanation for either the causes or effects of a given situation: • Define the situation under speculation clearly. • Explain possible causes or outcomes in detail and in logical order. • Persuade the reader that the argument is plausible. • Speak with authority, even though the speculation is tentative.	What would have happened if Little Red Riding Hood had arrived at her grandmother's house before the wolf? Base your speculation on inferences you can make from the story.	Traffic north on the 55 freeway is always backed up in the afternoon. Analyze the map of Orange County, California, and what you know about traffic patterns to explain why this phenomenon occurs.	What might have happened if Calhoun had won his argument with Clay? How do you think his ideas would have affected Clay's Compromise? Would it have brought the country closer to Civil War?
Interpretation	Analyze the meaning of a concept: • Introduce the idea with adequate context for the reader to follow, that will clearly control all the arguments to be presented. • State a thesis clearly. • Select details that support and develop the thesis. • Choose details from a text or from experience. • Show how the details relate to the thesis. • Convince the reader that the idea is plausible. • Order ideas logically.	Little Red Riding Hood said she "would never more pick flowers in the wood or listen to a wolf." Analyze what this sentence symbolizes about the story.	From what you know about the location and environment of the Town Center in Costa Mesa, California, analyze why it was a logical place to build the Orange County Music Center.	Study a political cartoon from 1850 and interpret its meaning.

Chart B. Suggested Writing Topics (Continued)

Type	*Features*	Little Red Riding Hood *topics*	*Map-reading topics*	*Clay Compromise topics*
Reflection	Reflect on the meaning a specific idea, object, or event might have on the world in microcosm: • Clearly explain the idea, object, or event that occasions the reflecting. • Turn the concrete situation over, exploring it clearly to find an abstraction it may represent. • Show the writer's process of wondering, probing, and thinking. • Come to a new or deeper awareness about the original idea. • Establish a clear, comfortable, personal voice.	The story illustrates the adage "Never talk to strangers." What does it say about us that we have created this slogan? Reflect on what you can learn about the human condition from this idea.	Reflect on what you can learn about humanity from looking at its highways. Think about the advent and development of freeways in southern California. What do our freeways say about us?	
Controversial Issue	Present a clear, convincing stand on an issue: • Describe the issue clearly. • Defend the stand with logical reasons supported by examples. • Show how the reasons support the position. • Present arguments against the opposition. • Order arguments logically.	In a sense Little Red Riding Hood learns not to take risks. What are your views on taking risks? Assuming your reader may not agree, state your opinion and support it convincingly.	Mass rapid transit for southern California is controversial. State your opinion about this issue. Assuming that your reader may not agree, present your argument and support you idea convincingly.	Imagine you are a senator representing Kentucky in 1850 and debating a senator from New York over the Clay Compromise. How would you persuade the Northern senator to agree with your position on the issue?
Evaluation	Judge the validity of a topic or subject: • Assert a clear judgment that controls the paper. • Establish clear criteria for judgment. • Argue and provide convincing details. • Order ideas logically. • Present an authoritative, convincing tone.	Other versions of *Little Red Riding Hood* have the grandmother escaping to find a hunter to kill the wolf before it attacks the child. Which version should be taught as part of our American culture?	Should the Corona del Mar Freeway in Orange County be extended from the San Diego Freeway through the Wild Life Preserve and Laguna Canyon and back to the San Diego Freeway? State your judgment and support it convincingly.	To what extent should compromise influence politicians' decisions?

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Chart C. Scaffolding

Prewriting for *Little Red Riding Hood*

The steps for prewriting are as follows:

1. Summarize the incidents in the plot. (Report of Information)
2. Draw conclusions from incidents in the plot; for example, Little Red Riding Hood is an innocent young girl, and so forth. (Thinking skill for drawing conclusions about significance and preparing for evaluation, speculation, or interpretation)
3. Quickwrite: What might happen if Little Red Riding Hood had arrived at grandmother's house before the wolf? (Speculation about Effects)
4. Discuss how these new changes would affect the plot. (Thinking for Speculation)
5. Quickwrite: What would an updated version of *Little Red Riding Hood* contain if it were done as (choose one): a. science fiction? b. monster/fantasy? c. punk opera? d. a musical from the 1950s? (A plan for a story)
6. Develop your plan into an actual story. (Story)
7. Think of a movie you have really liked. What made the movie good? List the features of a good movie. (Preparation for Evaluation)
8. Take your lists of conclusions and features of a good movie (items two and seven) and fit them together with your story. What elements does your story contain that keep it close to the original story of Red Riding Hood as well as make it a possible hit movie? What would you add to make your story into a good movie? (Thinking skills for Problem Solution, Evaluation, and Speculation about Effects)
9. List the reasons your story could become a box-office hit as a film. (Thinking skills for Problem Solution, Evaluation, Speculation about Effects)
10. In a mental dialogue, argue your idea with someone who has a different one. (Thinking skills for Problem Solution, Evaluation)

Writing

Before students write, they are given a writing situation that provides background for their assignment and directions for writing that explain the concepts to be developed.

Writing situation. Assume that you are a filmmaker under a contract to make an updated film version of *Little Red Riding Hood.* The producer is considering science fiction, monster/fantasy, punk opera, or a musical from the 1950s. He or she wants to be sure that the film will be a box-office hit. He or she has asked you to investigate the possibilities for the story and to recommend the best film version to make.

Directions for writing. Write a presentation to the film producer arguing for your choice of the kind of film to be made from *Little Red Riding Hood.* Show that you have considered each of the alternatives and that your choice will become a box-office hit.

Using Visual Stimuli to Motivate Reluctant Writers and to Foster Descriptive Writing Skills

By Sue Rader Willett
English Teacher, Capistrano Valley High School,
Capistrano Unified School District;
and Teacher / Consultant, UCI Writing Project

Motivating reluctant students to write is one of the toughest challenges facing any teacher. Often, we blame the problem on previous instructors, poor self-images, television, inadequate funding, boring textbooks, and (sometimes) ourselves. The problem seems to be perennial, but it is not without its solutions. I have found that using concrete visual stimuli in writing assignments seems to motivate and stimulate students to begin writing.

The following lesson on beginning descriptive writing works well with students of wide-ranging abilities and grade levels. I have employed it with great success in seventh through twelfth grade English classes, but I foresee no difficulty in adapting it for students in the primary and upper elementary grades.

Lesson: I See, I Hear, I Smell, I Feel, I Taste

Supplies needed: Slide projector, screen, slides of interest to students. (I have used slides of scenic vacation spots, local places of interest, common neighborhood and household scenes, master artworks, and historical sites. Many can be purchased at parks or museums or through publications such as *Arizona Highways*.[1])

Set the stage: Explain to your students that they will become sensory guides to their classmates and that they are responsible for constructing vivid images for each other. Emphasize the importance of using an accurate vocabulary that focuses on the senses. To help my students, I have planned vocabulary lessons of sensory / descriptive words. For example, I have shown my students a box of 64 crayons to remind them of the variations in shade and intensity of color. They often forget about magenta, teal blue, and chartreuse.

Take a quiet moment to tune the students into their present environment. Have them stop to listen to all the different sounds in the room, feel the temperature, look carefully at the carpet, and so forth. When you feel that the class is ready to begin the exercise, turn out the lights and project the first slide on a screen that all can see.

Slide one: Ask for volunteers to describe the scene in front of them as if they were there. One at a time, students will begin to explain what they sense by prefacing their statements with, "I see . . . , I hear . . . , I smell . . . , I feel . . . , I taste . . . ." (You may wish to omit the sense of taste, but do not ignore it completely for later assignments.)

Give immediate positive reinforcement to those who use specific and vivid language to create the scene. Tell them exactly what you find effective: "The word *mahogany* describes accurately the color of the leather saddle . . . I get a strong feeling of the sun warming your shoulders . . . ."

When you and your students believe that you are ready to proceed, ask for a few students (two to five), who act as imagery guides, to continue looking at the screen while the other students put their heads on their desks and cover their eyes.

Slide two: Project another slide on the screen, and ask the guides to begin constructing the scene for the other "blind" class members. One by one, the guides tell the others exactly what they see, hear, smell, feel, and taste. It is important to keep the comments quickly paced to increase interest and motivation.

The "blind" students may then ask the guides questions for more specific information: "How close is the tree to the rock? What shade of blue is the sky? What else would I hear?" Stop the students from asking questions when you believe that sufficient descriptions have been provided.

All the students may then look up to see the slide. Ask the students whether they had imagined the scene as it really appears and, if not, what did they see differently and why? Emphasize the strengths of the descriptions of the student guides but also tactfully suggest how they could have improved their descriptions. This is the natural time to discuss descriptive techniques that lead to effective writing.

You may wish to reinforce the following:

1. Organization, order, unifying factors
    a. Top to bottom and bottom to top
    b. Side to side

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[1] *Arizona Highways* is published monthly by the Arizona Department of Transportation, 2039 West Lewis Avenue, Phoenix, AZ 85009.

    c. Diagonally
    d. Out to focal point or in to focal point
    e. Tracing the light source
    f. Near to far or far to near
2. Word choice
    a. Vividness
    b. Accuracy
3. Comparison and contrast
    a. Metaphor
    b. Simile
4. Originality
    a. Avoiding clichés
    b. Using a fresh approach
    c. Creating an apt mood or impression
5. Full sensory involvement
    a. Sight (shape, light, color, texture)
    b. Sound (pitch, volume, intensity, rate)
    c. Taste (sweet or sour, texture, temperature)
    d. Touch (texture, temperature, weight)
    e. Smell (often linked to taste)

Continue the oral practice until the students are confident with their skills and are ready to stop. (Do not "slide" them to death!)

Begin to write: Ease into the writing practice by assigning students to write individual phrases or sentences rather than to say them aloud to the class. After the majority of the students finish writing their descriptions, encourage them to share their best sentences with the class. Continue to reinforce good techniques.

Variations of this exercise may include clustering or making lists of words or phrases. Homework may involve continuing the writing practice by having students use magazine pictures or snapshots as motivators.

This practice is designed to lead your student writers into developing effective paragraphs and compositions. Longer papers may be developed, with entire paragraphs unified by one of the five senses. The writing may also be integrated into assignments of narration, saturation reporting, journal writing, impression cataloguing, poetry, expository essays, letter writing, speech writing, and so forth.

As you begin to motivate your students to write by using slides and photographs as motivators, you will develop your own techniques to charm that reluctant writer into action. Then, believe it or not, one day you may even hear, "May we do some more of that fun writing today?"

Guided Imagery in the Sensory/Descriptive and Imaginative/Narrative Domains

By Dale Sprowl

Former English Teacher, Irvine High School,
Irvine Unified School District;
and Teacher/Consultant, UCI Writing Project

Guided imagery, a technique that enables students to tap their creative imagination and visual thinking skills, motivates students to write fluently in the sensory/descriptive and imaginative/narrative domains. "A Walk Through the Forest" is an exercise in guided imagery that I have used with students in a ninth grade basic level class, and it is outlined below. However, the lesson could be adapted to any other grade or ability level. The role of the teacher in this exercise is as a guide to help students create pictures in their minds. Once they have formulated these mental images, it is easy for them to translate the images into descriptive or narrative passages.

A Walk Through the Forest

Day 1 — Prewriting exercise: Turn off the lights and ask the students to close their eyes and relax. Read the following story slowly, pausing between sentences, to give the students time to develop images. Take 10 to 15 minutes for this.

> Picture yourself in a forest. You are walking through the forest on a path. As you walk, you see a person. You exchange glances with the person, but then the person leaves. You continue walking and you come to a body of water. You cross the body of water. You begin walking on the path again. Soon, you find a cup. You pick it up, look closely at it, and put it down. You continue walking until the path leads you to a fence. On the other side of the fence, you see a house. You go through the fence and into the house. Inside is a table. Something is on the table. As you are looking at it, you see the person you met in the forest.

As you are relating this story, you may want to add questions such as, "What does the forest smell like?" or "What is the weather like?" or "What is the texture of the water like?" Try not to limit the students' images by using only *he* for the person or by adding a handle to the cup. If it is left open to the student, he or she will be able to create a more vivid picture.

After telling your students the story, turn on the lights and ask them to share what they saw on their walks through the forest. Be sure to ask for specific descriptions of items—such as the cup, the house, the table— and list on the chalkboard the various perceptions your students had. Then ask them to retrace their journey in writing. Allow 20 to 30 minutes for this exercise.

Day 2 – Read three to five papers aloud and ask the class to discuss the techniques the writers used to convey the pictures in their minds. Reinforce sensory details, similes, metaphors, alliteration, or fine word choice. If the students were vague in their writing ("I saw a body of water."), elicit and list on the chalkboard possible bodies of water. Then ask specific questions about size, color, texture, surroundings, and so forth. Have the students reread their drafts and clarify hazy images.

Day 3 – Read three to five more stories aloud and discuss them as you did on day 2. Ask the students to extend their stories by adding dialogue. Discuss natural places for dialogue to fit in the story. If necessary, teach dialogue form. Continue writing.

Day 4 – Break down into peer response groups. Each person reads his or her paper to the group. Then each person in the group makes three positive comments about how the writer conveyed the images ("I like the way you used detail to . . ." or "One phrase I liked in your paper was . . ."), and each person makes one helpful suggestion ("One part that was hard for me to visualize was . . .").

Rewrite according to the comments. Make sure all items mentioned in the story are described in detail and in sequence.

Day 5 – Papers are due. Read three to five papers orally. Discuss vividness of detail, sequence of events, and literary terms that apply (plot, character, conflict, setting, point of view, and theme).

"A Walk Through the Forest" is just one of many guided imagery exercises that can be used to stimulate fluency and enhance both descriptive and narrative writing skills. Try this particular prewriting experience as a trial case, and then develop your own guided imagery frames to suit the objectives of your class.

Sequencing to Music: The Narrative Domain

By Mike Conlon

English Teacher, San Clemente High School,
Capistrano Unified School District;
and Teacher/Consultant, UCI Writing Project

Whether we approve or not, music has become the "message" from our students' point of view. For them, shopping in the mall, tanning at the beach, riding in a car, working, studying, and even writing have one common element—a constant musical accompaniment. Rather than fight their system, I believe it is both appropriate and essential to tap these airwaves and thus achieve our purpose as instructors and "muses" of writing. Music, I have found, not only unleashes an inner realm of unlimited fantasy but also provides the student with a quasi-meditative audio sensation that allows him or her to focus on the task at hand while quickly discarding any other present or impending distractions.

With this in mind, I set about teaching my students the basic aspects of *sequencing* within the narrative domain of writing by simply reading to them a short story framework (with six sections missing), accompanied by appropriate mood music. With the proper procedure, an adequate sound system, and a dramatic reading of the framework and "prompt" questions, magical things occur on paper. The five-step procedure I have used follows:

- *Step 1.* Inform students that you will be reading a story to them with parts missing, and each of them will be asked to supply the missing segments. Tell them which of the six parts they will be responsible for after they have heard all of the piece read once. They should listen for the missing sections as well as to the suggestions as to what might appear in these spots.
- *Step 2.* With lights out or with the students' eyes closed, start the music, and after the mood of the piece is established, slowly begin reading "The Mysterious Journey" (included below). On arriving at an omitted section,

read the prompt-type questions and suggest possibilities for the section. Then allow students time to imagine how they might complete the missing piece. Continue until you are finished.

For this particular writing-to-music exercise, I use Igor Stravinsky's *Le Sacre du Printemps (The Rite of Spring)*.

The Mysterious Journey

John inched the car along the gravelly road through the fog in search of a place where he could stop and rest and resume his lengthy drive up the coast in the morning. Drowsy-eyed, he continued to direct the car toward the ever-growing light which, seconds before, had pierced through the fog like a star in the dark wilderness. When John reached the crest of the hill, the light that was beckoning him forward now mingled with his headlights and illuminated a house which seemingly drifted in the fog, not 50 feet from where John now got out of the car. As he approached the house, John noticed . . .

(MISSING SECTION ONE—Describe the house and surrounding area. What did John notice? How much of the house could John see through the fog? What was the surrounding area like? Were there trees, swamps, animals, shadows, noises . . . ? What details of the house did John notice as he walked up the path?)

The old wood creaked with each footstep as John ascended the steps toward the guiding porch light. The wind had picked up, blowing the fog silently across the moonlight which shone down on the house. As he reached out to knock on the door he became aware of his heart pounding, just is it had that late October night when . . .

(MISSING SECTION TWO—Flashback. What happened that October night when John's heart was pounding? Was it at Halloween or some other time? What thoughts of this past event raced through his mind as he knocked on the door?)

The second knock was answered by a feeble, "Come in." John slowly opened the door and moved toward a weaker light flickering from a room through the doorway to the left. John carefully crept over to the doorway and looked in, seeing . . .

(MISSING SECTION THREE—Describe the room. Picture this room. What details could John make out? What type of furniture was there? What type of floor covering? What was on the walls?. . . the ceiling? Did his mind exaggerate any details?)

Within this room sat what appeared to be an elderly lady in a rocking chair, her back to the doorway, seemingly content to stare out her picture window into the drifting fog. As John approached her, he noticed . . .

(MISSING SECTION FOUR—Describe the old lady. How do you picture this old lady, the clothes she was wearing, the texture of her face and hands, the state of mind she seemed to be in as John approached her? Does she make any noises? Does John move closer to get a better look?)

"Good evening, young man," she said, and John . . .

(MISSING SECTION FIVE—Dialogue and action. What did John do? Why did he enter the house in the first place? What was his purpose? Do they speak? What surprises occur? Something did happen to cause John to react the way he did . . .)

He stumbled down the walkway to his car. He veered out onto the main road, racing toward the city nearly two hours away. He thought ahead to the . . .

(MISSING SECTION SIX—Conclusive action. What was he thinking ahead to? Why was he making the drive in the first place? Is there someone or something awaiting him? Finally, what happens to John on that foggy road, racing toward the city? Something did happen, because . . .)

. . . They had not been expecting him to arrive anyway.

- *Step 3.* When you are finished reading, distribute to each student the framework and prompt question sheet, with his or her specific section marked for completion. Then reread the entire piece, with each student brainstorming when his or her particular section arrives.
- *Step 4.* Divide students into groups, with at least two groups for each missing section (three maximum), such as groups 1A, 1B, 2A, 2B, and so forth. The task of the group is to combine the ideas of the individual members into a unified piece of between one-half and one page in length, which connects the frame for the story smoothly and appropriately.
- *Step 5.* A group leader, spokesperson, secretary, or volunteer is identified and given the

task of reading the group selection from his or her desk or at the front of the class (with teacher and five other orators, it is less threatening). The music is replayed, and the teacher resumes narration; then the students supply the missing pieces—first the "A" groups, then the "B" groups.

The most effective means of teaching sequencing for me is to type up all of the missing sections submitted by the groups and then to distribute copies to the class. We then go through the framework, section by section, and determine which entry works best and why. Obviously, the choices for sections one and two will affect the later selections. The creation of continuity is one of the purposes of the exercise.

More often than not, frustrated or inspired students relish the opportunity to write a missing section (sometimes all sections) on their own and to develop a true cohesiveness in the piece. I offer this opportunity as extra credit.

After completing another similar assignment, including a framework, prompt-type questions, and music, the students are soon able to construct their own stories without a framework. They need only be provided with evocative music and a hypothetical situation to start; for example, *La Mer* by Claude Debussy or music by a popular musical group and the hypothetical situation of a surfer at the beach at dawn.

Finally, as a project, students are invited to choose their own music and submit an accompanying scenario of setting and action that corresponds to the variations in the music.

How to Do "How To"

By Greta Nagel
Teacher, Rio Vista Elementary School,
Placentia Unified School District;
and Teacher/Consultant, UCI Writing Project

Students in our classes ride across campus on horses, set up model trains that whiz around the classroom, encourage dogs to do tricks, and cast trout flies across the basketball court. They cook and serve fancy hors d'oeuvres, set up mock theaters and roller coaster rides, and toss bowling balls across the carpet. They do these and many more things as part of the "How To" project.

"How To" is a unit of research and practical/informative written/oral work that is based on the students' hobbies. Each student does work that is related to his or her favorite hobby during eight to ten weeks of language class time. The project has four phases: (1) the basic written report; (2) the oral report and hobby fair; (3) extra written activities; and (4) follow-up activities.

My colleague Terry Kristiansen and I designed the "How To" activities in 1973 for students in grades four through eight. That year, the project won the "Promising Practices Award" that was offered by our school district, the Placentia Unified School District. Over the years, students have worked on "How To" in our classes and in classes of other district teachers who like the idea. Former students return years later and talk about the hard work and the fun that they had. High school teachers have mentioned that they are able to adapt "How To" ideas to their students' needs. It has been, indeed, a promising practice.

Tips on the "How To" Project

In order for the activities of the lengthy project to be effective, we believe that these tips should help:

1. Work on the unit during a time when students have already had some introduction to research tasks and to various types of writing. Otherwise, plan to do a great amount of intermittent modeling and practice as you proceed through the activities.
2. At least two weeks prior to starting the unit, announce that each student needs to choose a hobby. (Note: We have always allowed students to think of sports as a hobby.) Not only does this allow students to form a mindset, but it also permits you to check on the appropriateness of the topic and the availability of the materials. A topic like "How to Collect Smurfs" is difficult to research and hard to demonstrate. It is probably best left alone. A topic like "How to Collect Baseball Cards" can, on the other hand, be researched well if prior contacts are made with stores

and organizations. Giving a two-week notice can also provide students with time to locate other people who practice the hobby and who can serve as valuable research aides.

3. We always provide at least one piece of research material for each student. He or she must obtain two or more additional resources. The public libraries (children's sections) have been very accommodating in lending groups of books on special teacher loans, mainly because the choices are so varied and the supply of any one type of book will not be exhausted.
4. Plan to model activities for your students; show clearly the expectations that you have for their work. Terry Kristiansen and I share the hobby of cross-country skiing. We both brought in our outfits and equipment, and we demonstrated how we would write and do the various activities related to our hobby. We also designed posters (related to x-c skiing) that helped remind students of the basic sections of the report. We used these posters to decorate the classroom walls during the duration of "How To" work.
5. Do not forget to ask students whether or not you may save drafts of their work, samples of both the good and the average. They serve as excellent models for future classes.
6. Another tip is to set up a workable management system for handling the large volume of rough and final drafts that will come your way. Evaluate as you go along; do not wait until the end of the project. The threat of misplacing papers led me to set up a system of mailing envelopes. One envelope per activity is labeled and has a class list grid stapled to the front. Papers are checked in, and scores are recorded on the fronts of the envelopes, not in a separate grade book. At the end of the unit, I glue two sheets together, matching class list entries, and I have a complete permanent record.
7. A final tip: Keep a camera handy. The nature of this project makes it highly motivating; it is tied to students' senses of relevancy. They are proud to share their expertise in subjects usually not touched by the school's curriculum, and they are interested in one another's hobbies. They also enjoy bringing in their equipment and products for their oral reports and for the hobby fair. Snapshots and slides enhance those special moments—the boy with his king snake wrapped around his neck, the girl roller-skating backward across the classroom linoleum, the boy on his dirt bike by the chalkboard. Admittedly, excitement about the "fun" times helps students to plow through the great amount of writing. A spoonful of sugar . . .

The Written Report

The first phase of the project, the written report, requires skills in research, note taking, outlining, and the writing of rough and final drafts. There are six segments in the written report. For fifth and sixth graders, the usual lengths produced have been:

1. *History*—one or two handwritten pages: a narrative.
2. *Steps*—five to ten pages: Lists and drawings form just a part of a narrative piece that explains in great detail how to learn and do the hobby.
3. *Famous person*—one or two pages: a narrative about a person or animal that is related to the hobby. Some students have written about persons with an obvious tie-in to their hobby: Charles Schulz, Jesse Owens, Ringo Starr, and Margaret Bourke-White (photography). Others have used persons with an indirect relationship: Benjamin Franklin (philatelist), Teddy Roosevelt (stuffed animals), and Elizabeth Taylor (horses). Research strategies have sometimes included writing to famous people.
4. *Powers and pitfalls*—one or two pages: a narrative or a sentence chart that notes the good aspects and rewards of the hobby as opposed to the things that can go wrong, the dangers, and the costs. In this segment the student writer explains how to avoid or overcome the pitfalls.
5. *Interesting experience*—one or two pages: a personal account of an experience with the hobby, such as "The First Time I Rode Colossus," "My First Tornado," "The Day I Won the

Third Grade Art Contest," or "A Bad Luck Day Trading Baseball Cards."

6. *Interview*—two to five (or more) pages following a narrative, then question-and-answer format (à la "*Q & A*" in the *Los Angeles Times*'s magazine): Students seek face-to-face contacts with neighbors, shop owners, or local instructors. Telephone contacts are allowed when the students are unable to meet a "local authority." Students often use tape recorders but are nevertheless expected to do written versions.

Oral Report and Hobby Fair

Once the written reports have been completed, oral reports are scheduled; and students are allowed 15-minute time slots in which to tell about and demonstrate their hobbies. We have their fellow students complete evaluation score cards at the end of each report, noting points for each of the segments: (1) catchy opening; (2) how to; (3) audio-visuals; (4) eye contact; (5) loudness; and (6) appropriate time. Each speaker is expected to start with a "catchy" opening. Some examples are:

> "I have a real catchy hobby." (fishing)
> "This hobby will keep you in stitches." (sewing)
> "My hobby is a real hit." (baseball)

Minidemonstrations are also required. Students show how to hinge stamps for album placement, to tie flies, and to do knots for macrame pieces. They also show how to do ski turns, to fix a bicycle chain, and to sink a difficult putt.

When the class finishes giving oral reports, we hold a hobby fair and invite parents and other students to come. All class members set up booths where they display equipment and give minitalks to passersby during "milling" time. Several chosen speakers give their full oral reports at designated times. (Peer selection of honored speakers seems to work well.) If the room is large, several speakers may talk at once to their own audiences clustered near them. It is possible for two, or even three, shifts of speakers to talk, with their report times alternated with milling time for fair visitors. All students display their written reports.

Extra Written Activities

The extra activities are all creative in nature. Students enjoy these tasks and come up with delightful results. They write new words to old tunes ("Art of My Heart"). Using magazine advertisements, they practice the ploys of advertising copy and format ("Strong, adventuresome people collect stamps."). With graphs and lists, students present and analyze the results of popularity surveys and questionnaires ("From these five choices, more people selected roller-skating."). Complete with costumes and props, students entice new hobbyists from their "television studio" ("You'll just love learning to cook!"). With poems, often humorous, they proclaim positive and negative aspects of hobbies ("breathing, panting, gasping along"). Using home movies, the students show the details of "How To" ("Here's my dad guarding our basketball net."). Through an original piano solo, a student musician expresses the joy of playing the piano.

Follow-up Activities as Final Phase

Once the students' notebooks are compiled, one last phase of the project is possible. The follow-up activities are evaluative and analytical tasks that require the students to take a close look at the practical/informative "How To" experience. As students look back, they are pleased to have polished their skills in oral/written expression as they polished their skills with their hobbies.

The Bumper Sticker Approach to the Topic Sentence for Opinion Writing

By Trudy J. Burrus
Former English Teacher, El Toro High School,
Coordinator, Healthy Kids,
Saddleback Valley Unified School District;
and Teacher/Consultant, UCI Writing Project

In one of those do-or-die attempts to introduce the topic sentence and to retain my own sense of humor in the process, I decided to try using bumper stickers as a point of departure for the topic sentence in an opinion paragraph. I almost discarded the notion because of the potential for obscenity, but the advantages seemed to outweigh the possible problem, so I gave it a trial run. Of course, I had to revise and reorganize my plan after that first try, but it was worth the risk. The bumper sticker approach to the topic sentence for opinion writing works.

I use several variations of this lesson. The two I offer here are the foundation lessons, and their sequencing is important. Phase I does not involve any actual writing of sayings, just responding to the samples. In Phase II students write their own bumper stickers.

First of all, I have students bring to class examples of bumper stickers or slogans and aphorisms. These must meet my rules for what is or is not acceptable. Anything obscene or even cutely obscene is prohibited, and each saying must offer an opinion in sentence form or a form easily converted to a sentence. I begin the lesson by walking around the classroom and reading some of the bumper stickers aloud. This gives me a chance to select examples of some of the ingredients I want to discuss. I point out the following: tone, audience, ambiguity, purpose, attitude, audience response, direction, theme, point of view, and the different types of development to which the various topics and statements lend themselves.

Using their own samples, students then try to anticipate the questions that their sayings might evoke from an audience. The "No nukes is good nukes" sticker might elicit these questions:

What does *nukes* mean?
Why the play on words with *nukes* and *news?*
Why shouldn't we have nuclear weapons?
Why shouldn't we use nuclear energy?
What would nuclear disaster mean to me?

After the students have composed their questions, I collect the bumper stickers, and I make certain that the owner's name is on the back of each sticker. (Use index cards if stickers are not available.) I then redistribute the stickers to other students and ask them to write one paragraph in support of the position indicated by the new saying. Writing may be either serious or humorous. I usually time the writing and allow 15—20 minutes for the exercise.

At this point I divide the class into groups of four and ask them to compare each of their paragraphs in support of a particular slogan with the questions developed by the student who brought in that sticker. As a group they decide whether the questions have been adequately answered, whether those not covered need to be covered, and whether the paragraphs are still effective even though they do not answer the questions written by the original contributor. (This outcome does happen occasionally. But it is all right, and it might just signal a different problem that may need your attention.) The authors record comments and suggestions about their paragraphs, make suitable corrections, and rewrite.

In Phase II the bumper stickers can be used to reinforce the writing of concise topic sentences. The students select a controversy or other suitable topic for creating their own sayings. I recommend prewriting activities here, specifically modeling and group writing first. We discuss puns, deliberate ambiguity, the double entendre, malapropisms, and spoonerisms. I emphasize the necessity of getting tone, audience, purpose, attitude, and topic into a brief, on-target statement that is not mechanical.

Once the students begin writing their own bumper stickers, I encourage them to share the sayings with their neighbors. When the statements are smooth enough, the students then write accompanying paragraphs of support. Student partners identify the unanswered questions that they believe need to be addressed, and the paragraphs are rewritten. We then evaluate the finished products via a holistic read-around. (See the section of this book entitled "Read-Around Groups for Sharing/Responding" for a discussion of this technique.) The best examples are placed on the wall of the classroom. Because I have a window that faces the hall, each day one bumper sticker and its supporting paragraph are displayed in the window for the students to read as they pass by.

My greatest satisfaction in using the bumper sticker approach comes from the fact that this method gives focus and direction to topic sentences and, in turn, to the paragraphs that accompany them. Besides, it is fun. This lesson is not intimidating, yet it can be used to span a wide range of abilities, interests, and motivational levels. It keeps the students' interest high and promotes good student interaction. It is clear, to the point, and easy to model—but challenging. This is a nice way to provide the opportunity for the student who is so inclined to "test the water" in writing humor without making humor a major focal point of the assignment. Finally, I have witnessed an increased retention of the skills in writing topic sentences and a change in the quality of topic sentences because, by its very nature, the bumper sticker approach limits the excess verbiage that often accompanies unskilled opinion.

Welcome to the New World!

By Laurie Opfell

Former English Teacher, Irvine High School;
and Teacher/Consultant, UCI Writing Project

I have had remarkable success in my eighth grade English class with my "Welcome to the New World" assignment, which is outlined below. This project taps each of the four domains of writing; reinforces peer group interaction; and integrates writing, speaking, and drawing activities. It also enables me to introduce relevant works of literature, such as Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*, William Golding's *Lord of the Flies*, and so forth. The enthusiasm generated by the assignment has been extremely high, and the level of cooperation in the classroom has improved greatly. I give my students the following instructions for the lesson:

> Welcome to the New World. In the next few weeks you will be involved in creating your own utopia or "imaginary or ideal world." You will be graded on the completeness of two individual assignments, all group assignments, and the quality of your work. However, the most important aspect of the grade will be how you combine imagination, creativity, and innovation with the basic requirements. The objective of the project is for you to clarify and use your values, wishes, ideals, knowledge, and talents to create a personal and group statement about what you want and hope for in life.
>
> The assignments described below are for each person in the group to do. They will be assigned over many days:
>
> **Assignment 1**
>
> A. Although you are extremely wealthy, you and your friends are tired of the rat race and decide to get away. You decide to buy an island, but before seeing the real estate agent, you each:
>
> 1. Write down a preferred location.
> 2. List four to six things you want your island to include; for example, beaches, mountains, and so forth.
>
> B. Now, compare your lists and decide on a group location and a list that includes everyone's desired features.
>
> C. You are now ready to see your agent. She has just the place and shows you some slides.
>
> 1. Sketch out a few practice shapes for a map of your island, decide on one (or a combination), and draw the outline on a large sheet of paper.
> 2. Now, divide your island into equal portions so each group member has a section.
> 3. Agree on a symbol for each of the features on your group's list; for example, mountains ⋀⋀, lakes ___, beaches ∽∽, and so forth. Each person is responsible for filling in his or her section with the features that are appealing.
> 4. Be sure you also include a scale of miles, directions, symbols for roads, cities (if there are any), rivers, and so forth.
> 5. Decide how all major services (mechanics, food supply, health care, and so forth) will be handled, and set up a location for them.
>
> Now, go back over what you have noted and write it into a well-organized, descriptive one to one and one-half page piece. Share it with at least two people in your group, and get some suggestions for revision before you write your final draft.
>
> **Assignment 2**
>
> A. You now need to decide on the values that will be the controlling ideals of your island's government. Make a list:
>
> 1. Helpfulness?
> 2. Equal power?
> 3. Freedom?
>
> B. Now, share your list with your group members. As you read it to them, explain why you think each item is important. Make a group list of everything you all agree on.
>
> **Assignment 3**
>
> Since you have unlimited money, you need to start thinking about the home you will build. Take about 15 minutes to brainstorm, and then start writing about your ideal home. What would it look like? How

many rooms? What type of furniture? Colors? Building materials? View? Landscaping?

Now, go back over what you have sketched and write it into a well-organized, descriptive one to one and one-half page piece. Share it with at least two people in your group, and get some suggestions for revision before you write your final draft.

The next assignments are individual. You must select any two of the options listed below, all of which involve some critical thinking and creative writing:

1. *Constitution.* Write up your group's values or rules of living into some sort of document. (Look at the U.S. Bill of Rights for an example.) Make it beautiful, official looking, and one to one and one-half pages long. Include a statement of your philosophy.
2. *Architecture.* What types of design are likely to be seen on your island? Do they stand out? Blend in with the environment? Are they energy self-sufficient? Beautiful? Modern? Old-fashioned? Draw four or five different buildings and write a paragraph explaining each structure's best features.
3. *Clothing.* How do people dress on your island? Design four or five possible outfits that adapt to the environment. Make them as crazy, practical, or comfortable as you want. Draw a picture of each one and write a paragraph explaining it.
4. *Foods.* What are the island's staples? Interview all persons and get a list of their ten favorite foods. Design a restaurant menu that features everybody's favorite foods. Describe the foods and illustrate the menu with magazine pictures. (You might want to think up some original specialties.)
5. *Recreation.* What are the major forms of recreation? Interview all persons and find out what they want included. Then design a park that includes each item. Try to come up with at least three original sports or ideas that can be enjoyed only on your island. Illustrate and explain the new sports and draw a picture of the park on a separate sheet of construction paper.
6. *Flora.* Your island is the home of many different plants, but in addition to the usual varieties, you have several exotic types of trees and flowers. Illustrate and describe three of them and also include your island's environmental protection policy.
7. *Fauna.* Your island includes some well-known animals as well as a few that have yet to be discovered. Describe four or five of these rare species and write a paragraph explaining each one.
8. *Travel agent.* You are in charge of designing a brochure that advertises your island. Include a small map that mentions important or beautiful places and add photographs from magazines accompanied by flowing descriptions. Make your brochure the ⋁⋁ foldout kind. Neatness and layout are very important.
9. *Culture director.* What do the people on your island do to improve their lives? Interview the members of your group to discover their educational and artistic pursuits. Design and illustrate a cultural center and make a program of activities; for example, theater, movies, music, mime, computers, science, and so forth.
10. *Production manager.* On the final day of the project, you will present your island to the rest of the class. There will be only one chance to do this, so only responsible persons need apply. You will need:
    a. A specific knowledge of all important aspects of the island
    b. Good speaking ability
    c. Slides or visuals to use for illustrations
    d. Two or three music selections to play as background music

    Write a five- to ten-minute presentation that coordinates all of the above. Consult the clothes designer and wear a suggested outfit. You will be graded on your organization and on how well you capture our interest.
11. *Editor.* The group grade depends on you because you will compile all of the individual articles into a guide to your island. Proofread the articles for errors in correctness. Everyone should hand his or her rough draft in to you. Underline spelling, punctuation, and grammatical errors. Pay special attention to sentence structure. If you have any doubts about fragments or run-on sentences, consult with me or a parent. Return the edited drafts to their authors for correction. Final drafts must be written neatly in ink or typed and must be done on your own time. As the editor, you are in charge of collecting the articles, compiling all of the them in a folder, and preparing a table of contents.

Congratulations on the creation of your own personal utopia.

Writing the Saturation Report

Using Fictional Techniques for Nonfiction Writing

By Ruby Bernstein
Former English Teacher, Northgate High School,
Mt. Diablo Unified School District;
and Teacher/Consultant, Bay Area Writing Project

By using saturation reporting, you can encourage students to write about real events, people, places, and new experiences that they can observe firsthand. When you employ this technique, you ask your students to make all the sophisticated choices professional writers make: which points of view to use; which details and dialogue to include; which research, if any, to pursue; and, finally, how to structure the nonfiction experience.

Tom Wolfe, contemporary essayist, coined the term "new journalism" (saturation reporting) when he discovered in the 1960s that newspaper and magazine nonfiction journalists had borrowed fiction writers' techniques for preparing their feature stories. Today, examples of new journalism can be collected from the daily press, *The New Yorker,* Sunday magazine sections of major newspapers, and monthly magazines.

Giving students opportunities to practice observing, interviewing, separating fact from opinion, and using the library will result in better saturation reporting when the major assignment is made. These prewriting activities are particularly helpful in sharpening the students' focus in their writing. It is also helpful to have them brainstorm and ask lots of questions before they leave the classroom to carry out their prewriting activities, and it is equally helpful to have them share their experiences and pieces of their reports after they have made their observations or conducted their interviews.

My own experience with saturation reporting occurred several years ago at a summer writing class for teachers at the University of California, Berkeley, taught by Jim Gray, Director of the Bay Area Writing Project, at that time. I had been making daily trips to a weight-loss clinic, one of

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those advertised in the daily newspaper. The 30-day experience lent itself to saturation reporting, especially since I had reservations about the weight-reduction method, and my intent was to be a modern-day muckraker.

My purposes for writing, my underlying theses, were (1) to show that taking shots for weight loss was harmful to one's health; (2) to affirm that this particular clinic was directed by professionals with questionable credentials; and (3) to point out to my readers that the public generally wants quick solutions to problems, such as obesity, which may have taken years to develop.

After I had brainstormed my ideas for the paper with my six-member writing group, my paper's scenario took the shape shown in Figure 1.

The scenes surrounding my experiences with the weight-loss clinic, which were described separately, were put in final order, as indicated by the letters A through G in Figure 1. Hopefully, the total effect of this collage of scenes achieved my purposes.

After this experience with saturation reporting, I enthusiastically brought the assignment to my class. In my junior/senior composition elective course, which is one semester long, the saturation report became the major assignment, culminating the first quarter's work. Among the topics my students chose to saturate themselves with were revisiting junior high school, fast-food jobs, the senior prom ritual, department store dressing room gossip, cruising the Main, the school orchestra's bus trip to Modesto, riding on Bay Area Rapid Transit, bartending at a publisher's cocktail party, the local hangout after a football game, the final week of rehearsals for a community play. The possibilities for writing were limited only by time and sometimes transportation.

Saturation reporting lends itself to cooperative learning. Recently, my juniors, more than 60

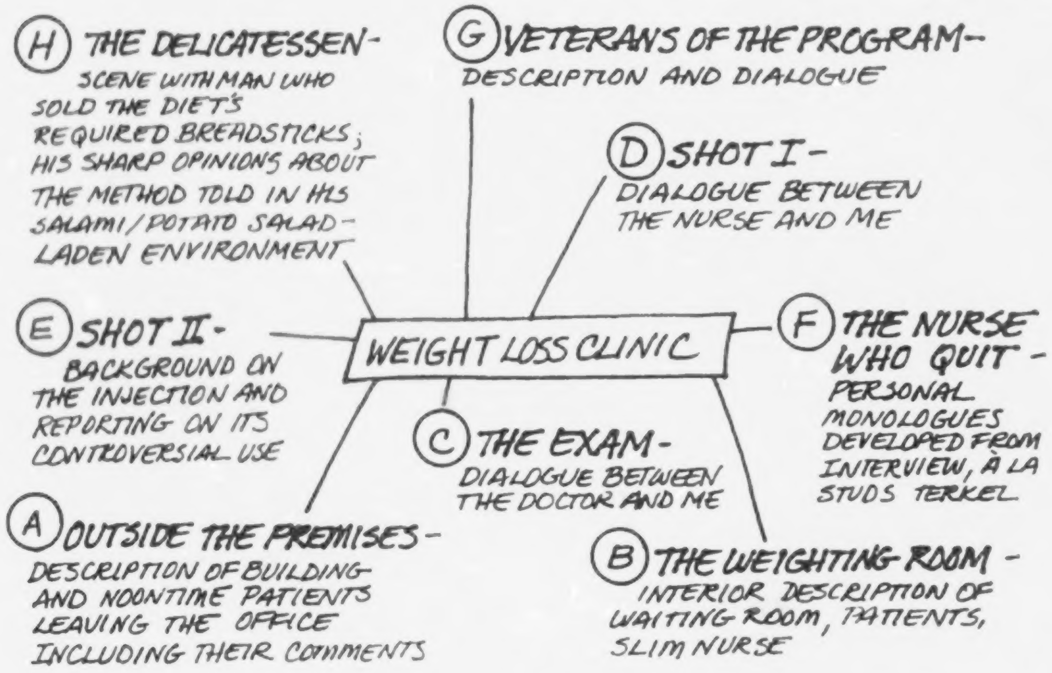
(H) THE DELICATESSEN -
SCENE WITH MAN WHO
SOLD THE DIET'S
REQUIRED BREADSTICKS;
HIS SHARP OPINIONS ABOUT
THE METHOD TOLD IN HIS
SALAMI/POTATO SALAD-
LADEN ENVIRONMENT
(G) VETERANS OF THE PROGRAM -
DESCRIPTION AND DIALOGUE
(D) SHOT I -
DIALOGUE BETWEEN
THE NURSE AND ME
(E) SHOT II -
BACKGROUND ON
THE INJECTION AND
REPORTING ON ITS
CONTROVERSIAL USE
WEIGHT LOSS CLINIC
(F) THE NURSE
WHO QUIT -
PERSONAL
MONOLOGUES
DEVELOPED FROM
INTERVIEW, À LA
STUDS TERKEL
(C) THE EXAM -
DIALOGUE BETWEEN
THE DOCTOR AND ME
(A) OUTSIDE THE PREMISES -
DESCRIPTION OF BUILDING
AND NOONTIME PATIENTS
LEAVING THE OFFICE
INCLUDING THEIR COMMENTS
(B) THE WEIGHTING-ROOM -
INTERIOR DESCRIPTION OF
WAITING ROOM, PATIENTS,
SLIM NURSE

Fig. 1. Brainstorming of Observations for Saturation Reporting

> *Giving students opportunities to practice observing, interviewing, separating fact from opinion, and using the library will result in better saturation reporting.*
>
> RUBY BERNSTEIN

students, contributed to a many-faceted assignment: "Walnut Creek, California—American Dream City." They used many writing modes and research techniques to examine the city's history and landmarks, the flight to the suburbs, commuting, their schools, weekend hangouts, and so forth.

Provided below is a list of the features of a saturation report that I share with my students before they select a topic:

Saturation Reporting

Features—A "saturation" report involves:

1. Writing about some place, some group, or some individual that you know well or can get to know well firsthand. You "saturate" yourself with your subject.
2. Writing a nonfiction article, using fictional techniques. There will be scenes, characters and characterizations, dialogue, and a subtle, rather than overt, statement.
3. The appeal of information and facts. You are writing nonfiction, and the reader will want to "know" about your subject; in short, be sensitive to this thirst for facts on the part of your reader.
4. Author identification. Your point of view can be quite flexible. You can be an active participant in the action; you can remove yourself; or you can come in and then move out.
5. Microcosm. You are focusing on some particular subject, but in so doing you are saying something more. As you capture an isolated segment of today's world, you say something about the total world.
6. Implication. Much of what you attempt to "say" in your article (because of your use of fictional techniques) will be said through implication—through dialogue and through your manipulation of details.
7. Reporting. You will observe your subject with a keen eye. You will note interesting "overheard" conversations. You might want to interview someone.
8. Form. You might write your article in pieces—conversations, descriptions, interviews, facts—and then piece it together, finding the best form for your subject (time sequence and so forth). A "patchwork"— working sections together with no transition—can be quite acceptable.
9. Choice of subject. You can pick some subject from the present or recreate some subject from your past.

Saturation Report—Triple Credit Paper

This paper will bring together some of the techniques you have practiced this quarter: use of descriptive detail, dialogue, narrative, close observation. For the saturation report you may do one of the following:

1. Teach or be taught a task.
2. Visit a place.
3. Capture an event.
4. Vividly describe a person.
5. Show your job in action.

No matter what you do, you will need to bring in an abundance of notes in which you have recorded your feelings, your detailed observations, conversations that you have heard, people you have spoken to, and descriptions. After all your visiting, looking, and listening, bring your notes in (more than you need, please), focus on your subject, and then write. Remember that your paper should make some kind of statement about lesson, place, event, person, or job. That statement may be stated or unstated as your material demands.

I also hand out a three-week schedule so that every student knows at what point in the writing process he or she should be on any given day.

Time Schedule for This Project

NOTE: Prior to the first week, students will have had experiences with showing writing, James Moffett's sensory reporting, ordering details, writing descriptions, and interviewing.

WEEK 1

Monday	Introduce saturation reporting. Read Tom Wolfe's *The New Journalism*—scene-by-scene construction, use of detail, point of view, use of dialogue.[1]
Tuesday	Read student examples. Read more of Tom Wolfe's explanations.
Wednesday	What are you going to write about? Check topic with teacher. Get your assignment for the on-campus group saturation report. Bring lunch to class today because you will be working during the lunch period.
Thursday	During the class period write your description of the campus scene.
Friday	Read and discuss the group's report. Use student models.

WEEK 2

Monday	Work with clauses.
Tuesday	Work with tightening.
Wednesday	Notes are due.
Thursday—Friday	Confer with teacher. Bring complete notes. We will discuss your focus, including underlying ideas and point of view. While conferences are in progress, complete the exercises in parallel structure, sentence combining, and clauses. Key will be available.

WEEK 3

Monday	Every student brings page one of report to share.
Tuesday	Write in class.
Wednesday	Completed rough drafts are due at the beginning of the period for peer evaluation and assistance.
Thursday	Bridge to the essay.
Friday	**Your finished paper is due.**

Saturation reporting can be adapted to grade and ability levels and to locale. Whether the students are asked to write a description of a scene, an interview, or multiple scenes, or whether they are responsible only for collecting facts with their tape recorders that their classmates will transcribe and edit with them, the finished product will be writing that the students will be proud they have done and that you will enjoy reading.

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[1] Tom Wolfe and E. W. Johnson, *The New Journalism*. New York: Harper & Row Pubs., Inc., 1973.

Practical Ideas for Assigning the Saturation Report

Preparing Students to Write the Saturation Report

By Carol Booth Olson

Director, UCI Writing Project

The saturation report is one of the most popular writing assignments I give to students in my freshman composition and teacher education classes. Because the topic is of their own choosing, students almost always get *into* their subject. Moreover, they are challenged to come up with unique approaches to communicating factual information in an almost cinematic style. The task of capturing an actual person, place, or event and bringing the subject to life through fictional techniques will naturally lead students to blend the sensory/descriptive, imaginative/narrative, practical/informative, and analytical/expository domains of writing.

In order to ensure that students put the most in and get the most out of their saturation reports, I take them through a sequence of steps that will prepare them to select a topic, organize their ideas, and write their papers. The sequence is as follows:

- *Step 1.* Explain to students several weeks in advance (so they have some "think time") that they will have opportunities to immerse themselves in a person, place, or event and bring their subject to life by presenting factual information, scene by scene, using description, characterization, dialogue, and so forth. Pass out the list of key features of a saturation report, as outlined by Ruby Bernstein at the beginning of this section.
- *Step 2.* Provide students with a model of a saturation report and a list of criteria on which their papers will be evaluated. (Note: The rubric should be created by each teacher to fit his or her objectives and classroom situation.) I usually begin by reading a paper to the class that I wrote about Houlihan's bar on Friday nights. Then I pass out one of my favorite student samples, a report on "Female Mud Wrestling," written by Dave Meltzer in a class I taught at Irvine Valley College. I include it here in its entirety because it is such a well-written saturation report that conveys the "you are there" feeling very effectively.

Female Mud Wrestling

"Good evening, ladies and gentlemen. Welcome to KRAZ's YOU ASKED FOR IT.

"Dave Meltzer reporting live from McChonahay's in Costa Mesa. Tonight, my crew and I are going to broadcast a most unusual spectacle—FEMALE MUD WRESTLING.

"Excuse me, sir, would you mind telling the viewers what your occupation is and why you are attending this event tonight?"

"Not at all," he said. "My name is Jim Jacobsen and I'm a Professor of Psychology at the University of California at Irvine."

"That's very interesting, Jim. Are you conducting some research?"

"Are you kidding?" He smiled as he spoke. "I'm here for the same reason that most people are here— to have a good time."

(Shrugging my shoulders . . .) "Well, so much for our system of higher education.

"Excuse me. Why are you here?"

A young man with blonde hair, wearing a cowboy hat replies, "To watch the chicks wrestle in the mud."

"You look like an attractive lady. Why are you here?"

"To find a man, honey."

"In that case, try the blonde with the cowboy hat."

A dazed-looking man at the bar suddenly spills his drink onto his lap.

"Sir, I noticed you sitting here in the corner. You don't seem that interested in the entertainment. Why are you here?"

"OOPS . . . I . . . Um . . . drinking . . . mud."

Well, so much for the clientele.

Bob Barison, the master of ceremonies for female mud wrestling, enters the room.

"Bob, over here.

"Ladies and gentlemen, this is Bob Barison, this evening's master of ceremonies. Bob, how did you ever get involved with this crazy event?"

"Well (slight pause), it began about four months ago when I was traveling across the Midwest. I happened upon a little bar in Kansas that was displaying a banner advertising Thursday night female mud wrestling. My curiosity got the better of me and so I decided to stick around and watch. I was truly amazed at the way the girls really put their all into mud wrestling and at the crowd's reactions. I thought to myself that it would go over big in southern California. When I returned to California, I approached a number of bar owners about my ideas, but McChonahay's was the only one willing to listen. We decided to give it a try. There you have it. Business has tripled so far, and there's no end in sight."

"That's very interesting, Bob. Do you enjoy this line of work?"

"Hell, yes," he answered. "Where else can you drink for free, say and do anything you want while the customers scream for more, see beautiful ladies wrestle, and be able to collect a paycheck for it?"

"I have to admit, it sounds great. Thanks for spending a few minutes with us, Bob."

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>
> CAROL BOOTH OLSON

The "grounds crew," as they are called, start preparing the ring. The ring consists of four foam blocks approximately six feet long and one foot wide that are hooked together by nylon straps to form a square. Inside the square the "ground crew" lays some more foam and covers it with plastic. Then the whole area inside the square is filled with cool, slimy mud. A bathtub arrangement is located off to the right, where the girls will be washed off after the match.

"It is time for tonight's main event." (The cameras turn to Bob who is making the announcement.)

"Awright! Awright!" he yells. "Good evening, ladies and gentlemen. Welcome to McChonahay's for a very, very crowded Tuesday night. Let me introduce myself. I am Bob Barison, your emcee for the evening. I will give you folks the play-by-play action until the very end. Are you ready for female mud wrestling?" (The crowd starts chanting "mud, mud, mud.")

"Awright! How many of you here tonight have seen female mud wrestling before?" (Lots of whistles and yells from the audience.) "How many of you are here tonight for your first time?" (About half the crowd raises their hands while the rest continue chanting "mud, mud, mud.")

"For those of you who do not know what this is, this is female mud wrestling.

"We have three different weight categories: the lightweights, the middleweights, and the heavyweights. The lightweights we call the Cream-puff Cuties, the middleweights are called the Middleweight Ms., and the heavyweights are called the Hefty Hunnies."

"Awright! Awright!" the audience yells.

"This is an audience participation sport. Your cheers, boos, and financial support are all greatly appreciated. Let me give you the rules and regulations of female mud wrestling. This sport is sponsored by the Female Mud Wrestlers Association of Southern California:

"Rule Number 1—The ladies must be in the mud at all times." (The crowd begins whistling and chanting to start.)

"Rule Number 2—The ladies cannot remove each other's clothing." (The crowd begins booing and chanting, "Skin to win, skin to win!")

"Rule Number 3—No scratching, no pulling of each other's hair, and no biting." (Crowd continues booing.)

"Rule Number 4—No poking in the eyes, ears, nose, or any other hole." (More booing from the audience—also some laughter.)

"Rule Number 5—There will not be any men allowed in the mud (still more boos) unless, of course, they are invited." (Crowd begins whistling and cheering.)

Bob yells, "Are you ready for mud wrestling?"

The crowd screams, "We are ready. Skin to win."

"Is that the best you can do? Are you ready for female mud wrestling?

"Ladies and gentlemen, to start things off this evening, we will begin with the Hefty Hunnies." (The crowd begins chanting, "Here comes the beef, here comes the beef.")

Bob introduces the challenger for the event. "Our first lady is reminiscent of those wonder women, bionic women, and other strange looking chicks—Wild Wilma." (As she enters, the disc jockey starts playing the song by the group Queen, "Sheer Heart Attack.") She makes her way to the ring dancing, taking off bits and pieces of her Wonder Woman outfit until all that is left is her wrestling suit, which consists of a one-piece bathing suit and some dark-shaded nylons. While she limbers up, the crowd goes crazy— throwing dollars, slipping them into runs in her nylons, shoulder straps, and some other areas.

Bob says, "Awright, let's have a big hand for the challenger. Now it is a great honor to introduce to you the champion for the past five weeks, Smooth Movin' Sam." (The crowd begins chanting, "Sam, Sam, Sam.") As she makes her entrance, the D. J. starts playing the song by Foreigner, "Cold as Ice." Sam goes through a similar routine, collecting the money and stripping down.

"Okay, ladies, in the mud," Bob says to them.

Are you ready? Let's count it down—everyone together. You've got 5 . . . 4 . . . 3 . . . 2 . . . 1 . . . mud wrestle!"

Right away Wilma's in trouble. The champ has her shoulders in the mud. She is trying desperately to free herself from the champ's powerful grip. All of a sudden, Wilma throws her legs up and catches Sam around her neck. The whistle sounds.

Bob yells, "Did you see that? Wild Wilma got out of that mess smooth as silk. Can she upset the champ tonight? We will have to wait and see. Are you ladies ready? Wrestle!"

Sam charges at Wilma, pulling her power play, trapping the challenger in a full body press between her powerful shoulders and thighs. Wilma doesn't stand a chance.

"She is down; it's a pin." The referee sounds the whistle.

In the second round, Wilma tries desperately to gain some points after that last pin but to no avail. But in round three, Sam is beginning to show signs of fatigue. Wild Wilma is all over Sam, toying with the champ as if she were a rag doll.

Bob announces, "The champ is in trouble now. Wilma has Sam on her back. She is positioning for the pin.
3 . . . 2 . . . 1 . . . It's a pin!" (The whistle sounds, signaling the end of the match.)

The crowd is going crazy—screaming, hollering, and throwing dollars into the air. Someone from the audience yells, "One more round."

And soon, the entire crowd picks up the chant, "One more round. One more round. One more round."

Bob asks, "How many of you work overtime for nothing? You want another round? Then give these girls some encouragement. Let's see those greenbacks." (The crowd begins to cough up the dough.)

"Thank you, folks."

"No, we don't accept VISA," Bob chuckles.

"Well, that's it for tonight, ladies and gentlemen. We'd like to stay for that extra round, but we've got to get back to the studio. Thank you for tuning in tonight. This is Dave Meltzer, live at McChonahay's for FEMALE MUD WRESTLING, signing off."

- *Step 3.* Once students have a clear idea of what the saturation report entails, ask them to brainstorm about the people, places, and events they could write about and to place the names on a chart like this one:

People	*Places*	*Events*

Then, have them put a *GI* next to the topics they are *genuinely interested* in and *MC* by the topics they are *mildly curious* about. After eliminating all the *MC*s from their lists, students can set priorities for their *GI*s and select the most promising topic.

- *Step 4.* Enable / require students to begin planning early by asking them to write a one-page abstract that explains what their topic is, why they selected it, and how they intend to go about getting the information they need. Review these abstracts while students share their ideas and get feedback from their peer groups. Meet with any students who still need to narrow their focus.
- *Step 5.* The students are now ready to go out and observe their person, place, or event. Encourage them to record everything they hear, see, touch, smell, taste, and so on and to note their own impressions and reactions. Allow a week for the information-generating stage of the process. (You may find the accompanying chart helpful for showing your students how the data they collect can relate to the domain of writing.)
- *Step 6.* When students come back to class with their notes, help them to organize their ideas

Sensory/Descriptive	*Imaginative/Narrative*
RECORD: Sights, smells, tastes, textures, sounds, action words, atmosphere words, character description	*RECORD:* Dialogue, time frame, ideas for scenes, transition words, dramatic effects, mood
Practical/Informative	*Analytical/Expository*
RECORD: Historical background, interesting facts and statistics, "how to" information, interview questions, and responses	*RECORD:* First impressions, reactions, afterthoughts, opinions, judgments, criticisms

by asking them to think of themselves as photographers or cinematographers. If they were filming this, what kind of camera angles would they use? What focus? What kind of lighting? How often would they change the scene? Then show them Ruby Bernstein's cluster of her exposé of weight-loss clinics (Figure 1) and ask them to create a scene-by-scene cluster of their report. Walk around the room to review these and offer suggestions.

- *Step 7.* Finally, to make sure that the students are off to a good start, have them write their opening scene and bring copies to class for sharing. Jenee Gossard's read-around technique (in the "Sharing/Responding" section of this book) works particularly well for bringing to the students' attention papers that look particularly promising. These papers can be read aloud to the whole group (in addition to being read silently by all) and discussed in terms of their special merits. Students can then go back to their own papers with a fresh perspective on their own writing, some new ideas gained from seeing other students' work, and the motivation of writing for their peers.

Even with all this preparation, some students will still write flawed saturation reports, but those students will be in the minority. My experience has been that the saturation report brings out the best in student writers. I always look forward to reading them because they are as diverse as one's students are—interesting, educational, and well crafted.

The Saturation Research Paper

By Catherine D'Aoust

Coordinator, Instructional Services,
Saddleback Valley Unified School District;
and Codirector, UCI Writing Project

I was teaching intermediate composition at the high school level when Ruby Bernstein introduced saturation reporting to our writing project. I was immediately interested in adapting this approach to some type of research paper. I thought that using fictional techniques in a research paper would be both challenging and interesting to students.

Basically, the assignment was to choose a famous person and to research a specific time in that person's life. Famous meant that there was sufficient research material available on this person to write a paper. In the paper itself the student writers were to capture in detail a moment in that character's life and to include a physical description of the person, details of the setting, narration (action), and interior monologue of the character.

To facilitate the collection of reference materials, I held several class sessions in the library. Students were required to record on 3" x 5" cards the footnote and bibliographical information they would need for their saturation research paper. I met with students individually while their research was in progress to make certain they were consulting a range of secondary sources and to discuss how to go about selecting one moment in their subject's life from the biographical information they had compiled.

Once the students had completed their research and narrowed their focus to one significant event in a famous person's life, I gave them the following directions:

> Your paper will focus on one particular moment in your subject's life. Describe what your person looks like, identify and describe where he or she is, and

explain what is going on at the time. Include, through interior monologue, what your character is thinking during this moment. Footnote all material obtained from research. Several successful papers have followed this order:

- Description of the setting
- Description of the action in the setting
- Introduction of the famous person
- Interior monologue of their thoughts

You are attempting to capture one minute or so in the life of your subject. There is no maximum or minimum paper length.

As an example of the above format, one student described a moment in Louis XVI's life. She focused on his execution in Paris, the tension on the scaffold, and his final moments of consciousness. Here is that student's description:

A Moment in Louis XVI's Life

A man standing on a scaffold, in the Place de la Révolution in Paris, is watched by thousands of people. He has been driven to this highly reputed location by carriage, in the company of an Irish priest, the Abbé Edgeworth. The troops are out in full force, and there are national guards as well as a strong military escort positioned by the condemned monarch's carriage.

The man who seems to be caught in the spotlight is Louis XVI. He was the King of France during its renowned Revolution. Although his clothes were somewhat disheveled, it was obvious, as one might judge from his habit, that he was definitely one of the hierarchy. At the age of forty, he was a thickset man with a puffy face. He possessed a long protruding nose, full, curved lips, and a broad forehead, over which his dark hair peeped out from under a curly, white wig. His large, dark eyes sent forth an expression that was not totally unsympathetic to the reasonable demands of his people for elementary justice; however, the peasantry's cry of, "Something has to be done by some great folk for the likes of us," had been ignored, and now they stood watching as their rage took vengeance upon their King. (2;21)*

As they readied Louis XVI's body for the guillotine, he lost consciousness and was as one already dead. From this state he was awakened—ages later, it seemed to him—by the piercing cries of the angry people. Keen, poignant agonies seemed to shoot from his neck downward through every fibre of his body and limbs. They seemed like streams of pulsating fire heating him to an intolerable temperature.

As to his head, he was conscious of nothing but fullness—of congestion. These sensations were unaccompanied by thought. The intellectual part of him had departed; he had power only to feel, and feeling was torment. Suddenly, his unconscious mind was awakened. He thought of escaping. To die at the guillotine—the idea seemed ludicrous.

He opened his eyes and was now in full possession of his physical senses. They were supernaturally keen and alert. He saw the scaffold, the captain, the sentinels—and he saw the executioners. They shouted and gesticulated, pointing at him. He felt ashamed and wondered, "Could it be through some fault of mine that France has been famine stricken, its finances turned chaotic, and its institutions ruined?" He sought for the answer and reassured himself that he wasn't to blame. He thought of the two previous Louises and remembered, "It was Louis XIV, who undermined the stability of France. Louis XV, whose sloth took France to the edge of abyss." (3;522)

As his mind searched for more proof of innocence on his part, he thought, "After all, it was I who sought to repair this damage to France. I am being punished for the deeds of others before me!"

It was unfortunate that he had to begin his reign as King of France at its worst moment, and to make matters worse, very little preparation was made to fit him for his destiny. He had received a sketchy education, and all knowledge of state affairs had been withheld from him by his insensate grandfather, Louis XV. Consequently, he had misjudged the magnitude of the problem and the temper of his people. Overwhelmed by the current situation, he thought to himself, "I had no idea that things would come to this!" Sadly he realized, "It's too late. Nothing more can be done at this place in time."

For Louis XVI, the end was near, and he could feel it for certain. In the final moments, a sudden urge swelled within him to speak to his people. Louis XVI's last words were, "Frenchmen, I die innocent, and I pray to God that my blood will not fall upon my people." (1;237)

The executioners proceeded with their duties, although somewhat disconcerted by his proud

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**NOTE:* The parenthetical notations refer to the following footnotes and the page references in these works.

1. Duc de Castries. *Lives of the Kings and Queens of France.* New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1979.
2. Gwynne Lewis. *Life in Revolutionary France.* New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1972.
3. Frank Usher. "Louis XVI." in *100 Great Kings, Queens, and Rulers of the World*, edited with an introduction by John Canning. New York: Taplinger Publishing Company, 1968.

> bearing and fearlessness. As the knife fell, cries of thousands of people filled the air, willing the King's death. People dipped their fingers in the royal blood, and one tasted it saying, "It is vilely salty." (1;237)
>
> There was no mourning in Paris that day. The theaters were full and much wine was drunk. The body was taken to the cemetery of the Madeleine and covered with quicklime.

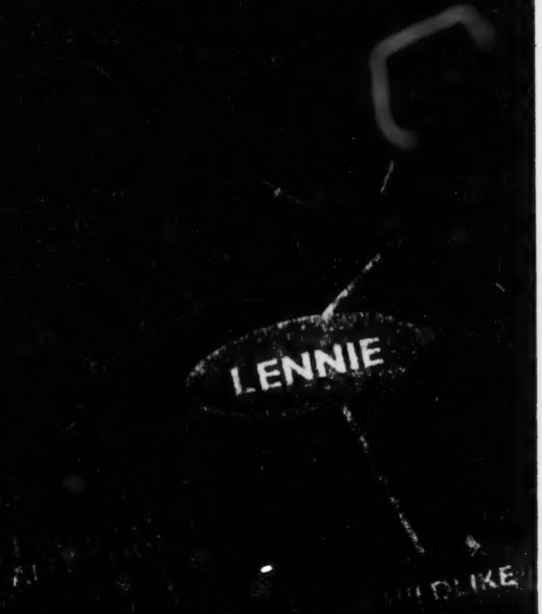
Later I used this same assignment in an advanced composition course. These students were, of course, much more concerned with style. They were able to blend the elements of fictional writing into nonfiction more successfully. Many of them began with action or interior monologue; they all tried different ways of mixing narration, description, characterization, and dialogue.

Regardless of their skill level, my intermediate and advanced composition students enjoyed my research-oriented version of the saturation report. They immersed themselves in the life of a famous person of their choice and were able to recreate one moment in that person's life. To do this successfully, they had to do more than just state the facts; they had to bring research to life by dramatizing it. Reading these papers was a special pleasure because the students tapped all of their descriptive, narrative, and expository writing skills to make their saturation research papers interesting and informative.

Uttering a word is like striking a note on the keyboard of the imagination.

LUDWIG WITTGENSTEIN

Point of View in Writing



A Lesson on Point of View . . . That Works

By Carol Booth Olson
Director, UCI Writing Project

To make the concept of point of view comprehensible to students, I include a writing assignment in my composition class that enables each student to become a literary character and to speak through that character's voice. The emphasis of the lesson is twofold. First, it provides an experiential "learn-by-doing" approach to improving writing skills. As James Britton, a British researcher on writing, points out in *The Development of Writing Abilities (11–18)*, when writing becomes a genuine mode of learning instead of just a vehicle for showing what one has already learned, there is more opportunity for the student to discover his or her own personal voice as a writer.[1] Second, this kind of assignment fosters critical reading skills because the student must think deeply about a piece of literature in order to assume the point of view of one of the characters.

Although the lesson described below was originally designed for community college students, the concept and the strategies can be easily adapted to any grade level and work of literature. To begin, I introduce the following aspects of point of view: *who* (first person, third person, omniscient narrator, and stream-of-consciousness narration); *when* (past, present, future, and flashback); and *where* (from a distant perspective, in the midst of the action, from beyond the grave, and so forth). I then ask the students to read John Steinbeck's novella *Of Mice and Men*. This book works well for a variety of reasons. Since the majority of my students do not read for pleasure and need to be encouraged to discover the value of a good book, the brevity and pacing of *Of Mice and Men* is attractive for an initial reading and writing assignment. The universal themes of the novella are also readily accessible and lend themselves to a class

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[1] James Britton and others, *The Development of Writing Abilities (11–18)* (Schools Council Research Studies). Houndmills Basingstoke, Hampshire: Macmillan Education Ltd., 1975.

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discussion that everyone can contribute to. Finally, the authorial voice that John Steinbeck uses to set the stage for his drama is quite distinct from the dialogue in which his main characters, two itinerant farmhands, speak for themselves—revealing their hopes and dreams, frustrations and limitations.

Because of my exposure to the California and National Writing Projects, I am a believer in teaching writing as a process and, whenever possible, structure my assignments in such a way as to include instruction and "think time" for each stage of composition: prewriting, writing, sharing/responding, rewriting, editing, and evaluating. As a prewriting exercise for my lesson on point of view, I use Gabriele Rico's clustering technique to generate ideas for discussion. (See Dr. Rico's description of clustering that appears earlier in this publication.)

During the clustering session, the instructor writes a stimulus word on the chalkboard and asks students to make free associations to conjure up words, images, and phrases in bubbles around that stimulus word. These clusters are then used as a basis from which to create short paragraphs about the designated topic. For this particular prewriting exercise, I ask the students to take ten minutes to jot down anything that comes to mind in relation to Lennie and George, the protagonists in *Of Mice and Men*. We share these associations as a group and develop clusters, such as the one shown in Figure 1. Then, rather than asking students to write freely, using their clusters as a point of departure, I try to elicit one sentence from our discussion, such as, "Lennie's mind is not right," which students must illustrate in a paragraph using Rebekah Caplan's strategy of "showing, not telling" (see Rebekah Caplan's section earlier in this book); that is, of showing Lennie's mental infirmity rather than directly telling about it, as in the sample that follows:

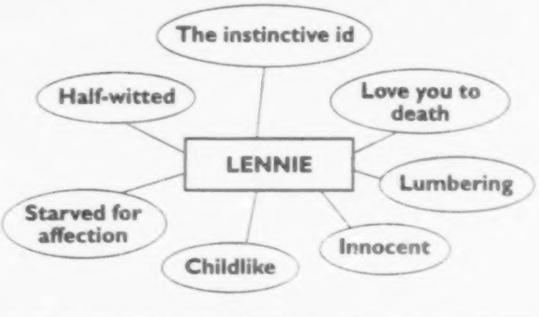

Fig. 1. Clustering of *Lennie* from *Of Mice and Men*

> **Lennie's mind is not right.**
>
> Towering over all like a giant, ignorant of his strength, Lennie crushes the life out of the objects of his affection like so many paper dolls. And then he looks at George, helplessly, questioningly, burning with shame because he has done another bad thing and terrified that there will be no more soft, fuzzy creatures to fondle. He's kind of like those puppies he smothers with love—filled with need, anxious to please, obedient to his master. George just shakes his head and wonders what's to become of them. "Tell me again about the rabbits!" The broken record is stuck on the same groove. Lennie smiles dreamily as the nightmare unfolds—oblivious to all but the pretty picture in his head.

We follow the same procedure of sharing cluster words about George, although more emphasis is now placed on comparing and contrasting the two characters. But when it comes time to show that "George is his brother's keeper," I ask the students to write their paragraphs as monologues from George's point of view, as was done in this example:

> He ain't smart but he's a worker, old Lennie is. He can do anything once you tell him how. Sometimes he makes me so mad, I just tell him to jump in the lake. But he does it. Pathetic! How can you deal with a guy like that? I know I'd probably be better off without him. Trouble is, I think I'd probably miss him, crazy as it sounds. And I'd always be wonderin what kinda trouble he was gettin into with no one to get him out of it. I guess we gotta stick together.

Having established this foundation for writing, I give the students the following assignment:

> At the conclusion of *Of Mice and Men*, Slim leads George away from the river and up towards the highway, reassuring him that he had to kill Lennie; there was no way out. Imagine that Slim and George head into town for some stiff drinks and deep conversation. Please begin your paper at this point. *Writing assignment:* In George's words explain to Slim why *you* killed Lennie. Remember that you must *become* George to write this paper. You are limited to his vocabulary, his perspective on life, and his level of sensitivity. In your dialogue suggest either directly or

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indirectly: what Lennie meant to you, what significance the dream of the land and the farmhouse has or had for you, and your perception of what life will be like without Lennie.

To clarify what is expected of the student on this assignment, I hand out a two-page scoring guide based on a 1 to 9 holistic scale that outlines the characteristics of a successful and unsuccessful paper:

9—8 This paper is clearly superior—well written, coherent, clearly organized, and insightful. A 9—8 paper does most or all of the following well:

- Maintains a clear point of view; i.e., speaks through George's voice and sees through George's eyes.
- Portrays George in a manner that is consistent with John Steinbeck's depiction of him.
- Shows insight into George's character and into the main themes Steinbeck presents in the novella.
- Responds to the questions of why you killed Lennie, what he meant to you, what significance the dream of the land and the farmhouse has or had for you, and what you think life will be like without Lennie.
- Displays the writer's own voice through the description that is external to George's and Slim's dialogue (such as establishing setting).
- Uses descriptive, precise, and appropriate diction.
- Handles dialogue effectively.
- Varies sentence structure and length for effect.
- Uses the conventions of written English (spelling, punctuation, grammar, complete sentence structure, proper format for using dialogue, and so forth) correctly. (*Note*: Grammar may be violated and slang words used in this case in the dialogue portions of your paper.)

7 This paper is a thinner version of the 9—8 paper. It is still impressive and interesting but less well handled in terms of point of view, organization, or diction. The 7 paper is also apt to offer less insight into George's character and into Steinbeck's main themes.

6—5 These scores apply to papers that are less well handled than the 7, 8, or 9 paper. A 6—5 paper may be less insightful, more loosely organized, or less comprehensible to the reader. A 6—5 paper will exhibit some or all of the following:

- Speaks through George's voice but is not entirely clear in terms of the message conveyed.
- Portrays George in a manner that is generally consistent with Steinbeck's depiction of him but in such a way that the character does not sound real.
- Responds directly to why *you* killed Lennie but only touches on the other three subquestions.
- Tends to say the obvious and does not display any special insight into the characters.
- Displays little or none of the writer's voice through description of setting.
- Uses less descriptive, precise, or appropriate diction than in the 7, 8, or 9 paper.
- Handles dialogue less effectively than the 7, 8, or 9 paper. (The dialogue may either drag or be too sketchy.)
- Uses little or no variation in sentence structure and length.
- Contains some problems with the conventions of written English but none that seriously impairs the message.

4—3 These scores apply to papers that follow the general idea of the writing assignment but that are weak in thought, language facility, or the conventions of written English. A 4—3 paper exhibits some or all of the following:

- Speaks through George's voice only intermittently or not at all. Who is speaking may be unclear.
- Portrays George in a manner that is inconsistent with Steinbeck's depiction.
- Fails to respond to the four questions posed in the writing assignment.
- Displays very little insight into Steinbeck's characters or main themes.
- Uses overly general diction not suited to George's character.
- Uses dialogue ineffectively or not at all.
- Presents the purpose of paper unclearly.
- Contains little or no differentiation between style and sentence patterns in the "George portion" of the paper and in the writer's description of setting. Contains serious problems in the conventions of written English that impair the author's message.

2—1 These papers:

- Fail to speak through George's voice.
- Neglect the four questions posed in the writing assignment.
- Have superficial and/or fragmented and cloudy content.
- Indicate that the writer has misunderstood or perhaps has not read the book.
- Contain serious problems in the conventions of written English.

Note: An extremely well-written paper in terms of the conventions of written English may receive a point higher from the scorer than it would on the basis of content alone. A paper that is strong or satisfactory in content but that has serious problems in the conventions of written English should be docked up to two points, depending on the nature and frequency of the errors committed.

I give students one week to write rough drafts of their point of view papers and ask them to bring four photocopies of their work to class for discussion. I then allow one class session for students to meet in their groups to make critiques, read their papers aloud, get feedback from their group members, and make notes for revision. Early in the semester I train my students to use the following techniques adapted from Peter Elbow's *Writing Without Teachers* (see Peter Elbow's section that appears later in this book):

- Pointing to the words—trying to remember key words or phrases that seem strong or weak
- Summarizing the writing—summarizing the piece of writing in a single sentence or choosing one word that captures it to help the writer determine whether the message he or she intended comes across clearly
- Telling the writer what happened—describing the thoughts and feelings that come to mind as the writer shares his or her work

I also stress that students should be descriptive rather that evaluative in their remarks, and I remind the class that there is no right and wrong in writing—only what communicates and what does not. While students are sharing their papers, I call them up one by one and offer my comments and suggestions.

The revised paper is to be scored in class the following week. Using the scoring guide I provided, members of writing groups must score the papers, come to a group consensus, and fill out an evaluation sheet for papers written by four students from another writing group. The papers are then handed in to me for my score (which I average with theirs) and my written feedback.

I was particularly impressed with the quality of the papers that were turned in for this assignment. The students demonstrated a clear grasp of point of view, a depth of feeling for the character whose voice they were assuming, and an overall understanding of John Steinbeck's underlying themes. Ultimately, I feel that this lesson positively affected future papers, because it not only made students more aware of point of view in literature, but it also increased their recognition of their own voices as writers. A sample of a student paper written by Charles Wrightson, who was in my English 1A class at Irvine Valley College, follows:

George Speaks

The sun had fallen through the soft, dusty haze when they finally reached Soledad. Slim let the other farmhands come along but told them to leave George and him alone. They went to Suzy's Place, their boots kicking up little dust clouds and scraping on the gravel at the side of the rutted old road.

Suzy met them at the door and looked them up and down. But before she could say anything, Slim said softly, "The boys can do what they want. Me an' George want a quiet table alone."

After reading Slim's face and tone, she looked at George, lowered her eyes, and slowly nodded her head with its lovely blond curls. She led the way to the side table, brought a whiskey bottle and two shot glasses, and left after a slow look at Slim.

It seemed that George had sat there for hours, slumped, looking deep into the dark grain of the wood table for an answer. All he saw was the gun shaking in his nerveless hand, Lennie's head exploding from the impact, his body twitching as it fell over, and the blood pool beginning to grow like water from a slow spring.

"I been lookin' after Lennie my whole life," he finally whispered, still staring into the table.

Slim poured two shots of whiskey and handed George one. George downed it and felt like throwing up but kept it down because he needed not to think for awhile.

"You done all you could, George," Slim softly said. "All you could."

As he looked into Slim's eyes of steel, George felt the shock starting to leave him, but anger was welling up: "I had to shoot 'im! I had no choice. I couldn't let 'im alone for a minute. That bastard Curley was just waitin' to string 'im up."

George grabbed another shot of whiskey and downed it, trying to calm his nerves: "He was jus' like a big kid, but so strong an' he didn't know what he was doin! I couldn't let 'im go on like that."

George felt his eyes begin to burn, but he wasn't going to cry in front of Slim. So, he kept talking: "That poor kid couldn't a' been mean if it meant his life! Poor kid."

Again, George downed the refilled glass. Slim didn't say anything—just poured another and another. George kept talking. He felt like telling Slim everything. Without Lennie, there was no secret to be kept.

"I kept tellin' 'im about a place—a beautiful, green place all our own. At first it was jus' to keep 'im in line, ya know; but he'd get me talkin' and dreamin' and soon I'd start to ask myself, 'Why not? We could do it.' Oh, I knowed it probably wouldn't never of happened, but it was all that kep' us goin'."

George stopped, feeling the burning in his eyes again, thinking about living without Lennie. Lonely. Just drifting from place to place—with no friends. Terribly lonely.

"Yeah, all we had . . . ," he said, "except each other. Now I ain't even got him no more."

"What you gonna do now, George?" Slim asked.

"Don' know, Slim, I jus' don' know. He was all I had. But I had to shoot 'im. You see that, don' you Slim?"

Without responding, Slim stood up, deciding it was time to leave. "Come on, George, we'd better be gettin' back," he urged.

Slowly wavering, George got to his feet. He was pretty drunk, but his head was clear: "I guess I'll work the month out an' then move on, Slim."

Slim looked at George for a minute, put his arm out to brace his friend, and helped him outside. "I guess that's best, George," he agreed. They moved out into the deep night with the rich smell of barley on the dry, whispering breeze and headed down the dusty road.

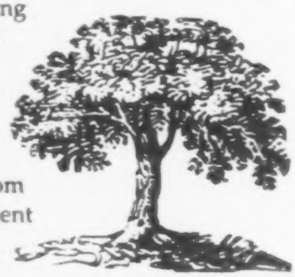
Practical Ideas for Teaching Point of View

Teaching Point of View Through Characters from a Novel

By Elizabeth Williams Reeves
Teacher/Consultant, UCI Writing Project

As readers, we often tend to discount story characters of minor significance and focus on either the protagonist or antagonist. By enabling students to consider the points of view of all characters, we may help them establish a clearer understanding of varying personality traits, emotions, and actions.

A lesson I have designed to increase students' awareness of point of view comes from *The Hobbit*. In one segment of the novel, Bilbo, his



dwarf friends, and Gandalf, the wizard, are captured by the goblins and taken prisoners in the goblin cave. I ask students to place themselves in the positions first of Bilbo, then Gandalf, and finally, a goblin, and to consider the following questions:

1. After Gandalf, Bilbo, and the dwarfs entered the cavern to find shelter from the thunder battle, how did you feel?
2. How did you feel when the cave opened up?
3. How did you feel as you stood in the great cavern before the Great Goblin? What did you do?
4. How did you react when the Great Goblin was smote before your eyes?

Student models of the beginning paragraphs written from each character's point of view follow:

1. *From Bilbo's point of view:*

   I was dumbfounded to find that my nightmare had come true. The wicked monsters led the dwarfs and myself down into their lair. There, the Great Goblin sat. My knees knocked, one against the other.

2. *From Gandalf's point of view:*

   Bilbo's scream provided me with just enough warning to escape the clutches of the goblins. I grabbed my wand, and with a flash of lightning, killed a few of the wicked monsters. Then, I quickly slipped into the long, dark corridor which led to the cavern below.

3. *From a goblin's point of view:*

   I heard the voices of intruders in the cave overhead and grabbed my goblin friends to see what we had caught. Luscious dwarfs and ponies lay within our grasp. With hoots and hollers, we began to gather them up, when out of a corner came a mighty burst of lightning, killing several goblins. We hastily took our new-found treasures (captives) down into the cavern and began to celebrate.

After the students have explored three different points of view, their assignment is to assume the role of one of these characters and to write a more lengthy narrative/monologue recounting the adventure in the goblin cave. I find that they have a much easier time becoming a character after exploring the same scene from several different perspectives.

An Inside Look at Fear: Point of View in *The Crucible*

By Julie Simpson

English Teacher, Sunny Hills High School,
Fullerton Joint Union High School District;
and Teacher/Consultant, UCI Writing Project

> *You never really understand a person until you consider things from his point of view . . . until you climb into his skin and walk around in it.*
>
> from Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird*

I want my students to be able to transfer Atticus Finch's advice to his daughter in *To Kill a Mockingbird* to their reading of Arthur Miller's play *The Crucible*. I want them to identify with John and Elizabeth Proctor, Abigail Williams, Reverend Parris, and the others to the point that they can feel what it was like to be a Puritan. Moreover, I want them to know that the same fears that caused these people to become fanatics, making them believe that they had some control over the uncontrollable, are still motivating people today.

I believe that underlying Arthur Miller's criticisms of the actions of the witch hunters, he has a sense that these people of Salem were living the best way they could in the world as they saw it. Virtually every character reaches a point when, because of some personal sense of inadequacy, he or she panics. Some exploit this panic to give themselves power. These people become self-righteous toward others and attempt to destroy them through a false representation of goodness. To appear in control, others try to become a part of the fanatical crowd and condone the manipulations of power. Still others, the stronger, overcome their personal fears and sacrifice themselves for what they consider a higher value.

This examination of fear and the ways we handle it make Arthur Miller's play more than merely an historical account of the witchcraft trials of Salem, Massachusetts, or a sociological attack on paranoia.

To enable the students to understand the characters, we first read the play aloud in class. I go over Arthur Miller's explicit introductions of the various characters and (with considerable guidance) ask the students to choose who they want to be.

Then I give all of my students a list of questions to consider after they select their respective parts and prepare to give a dramatic presentation in class. The questions, which follow, are designed to help the students examine their chosen character's fears, find each situation that causes panic, and understand how the character copes with fears and panic:

- What does your character think of himself or herself?
- What is he or she most afraid of?
- What does he or she think of the people of Salem?
- What behavior or belief shows that he or she is a good Puritan?
- What decision does he or she face?
- What several choices does he or she have?
- Why does your character make a particular choice? (Deciding not to choose is also a choice.)
- Why does your character believe that his or her choice is right?
- Does your character consider the consequences when he or she makes a choice?
- Does your character's choice change his or her personality or values at all?

Of course, we discuss the play as we read it. I preface each discussion with short writing and discussion problems that make the students consider real-life decision-making situations. For example, in Act I when the girls are caught conjuring in the forest, they become hysterical and finally accuse Tituba of bewitching them. To help the students with the assignment, I give the following prompts:

- Think of a time when you were caught doing something you were strictly forbidden to do. What did you do to get yourself out of trouble?
- Think of someone you resent. Write a paragraph explaining what this person says and does that makes you feel he or she is out to get you.
- Describe a situation when you got carried away in a crowd and did something you would not have done had you been alone.

For Act II, to further the students' understanding of the relationship between Elizabeth and John Proctor, I ask the class members to consider their own interpersonal relationships:

- Think of a time when you have hurt someone you love. What did you do to regain his or her affection? How carefully did you plan your actions and comments? How long did it take for things to become normal again?
- Have you ever lost trust in someone you love? How did your behavior with that person change? How were you able to regain that trust?

For Act III, which deals with the power of hearsay and rumor, I pose the following questions:

- Think of a rumor you heard recently. At the moment of your hearing it, what did you believe? Who had control—the one who spread the rumor or the one about whom the rumor was spread?
- How can you stop a rumor that has damaged your reputation?
- Would you lie or go against some firm belief you hold to save the one you love?

Finally, for Act IV, when John Proctor has to decide to die for truth rather than to live a lie, I urge the students to look within themselves and examine their own beliefs and convictions:

- Can you think of any situation or idea that is important enough to you that you would die for it?

> *Thus, the students must look into the character's fears and motivations to determine why this person's actions were justifiable in terms of his or her values.*
>
> JULIE SIMPSON

After we finish reading and discussing the play, I ask the students to think as their character would and write an explanation, in the character's own words, about the reason for his or her choice. (They may select any form of writing and write to any audience they think most appropriate for their character.) The students must write from the assumption that the character behaved in the best way he or she possibly could. Thus, the students must look into the character's fears and motivations to determine why this person's actions were justifiable in terms of his or her values.

The students are enthusiastic about this activity. Consequently, the papers they write are often the most perceptive, the most creative, and the most detailed ones they write all year. They feel that they have stood in their character's skin and walked around for a while.

Writing the I-Search Paper

The Reawakening of Curiosity: Research Papers as Hunting Stories

By Ken Macrorie
Professor Emeritus of English,
Western Michigan University

We need to smile at what we and our students have been doing in the name of research all these years. Repeated several times in almost every student's educational career, the assignment to prepare a research paper may produce a full-fledged *dunderhead*, which according to my *Webster's New World Dictionary*, comes from the Dutch *donder*, meaning thunder—associated by rhyme with *blunder*. That is a fascinating chain: The new word has lost all relation with *thunderhead* and fits the writer of a conventional research paper, who makes no great sound or light in the sky. I cannot think of a righter word than *blunderer* to describe the conventional student researchers staggering through the card catalog and the stacks with their 3" x 5" cards, copying passages from books and journals they do not understand, as if they were boring test holes and removing core samples from the heads of authors.

When I first broached these notions to teachers around the country a few years ago, I was met by laughter and squeals of agreement. I found that many high school and college teachers, out of anger and frustration, had asked students to do something like what I call an I-Search paper. I use the term *I Search* rather than *research* not to convey that this paper is written to search an I or me, to come to "know oneself," but rather to remind the reader and writer that there is an *I* doing the searching and writing who affects the bend and quality of truth in the work. And so the *I* affects all conventional research papers inside and outside school, although that straight-standing, cocky little word seldom appears in the writers' texts.

Since I published a whole book on the I-Search in June, 1980, I rarely speak of the idea publicly

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now, but teachers want to tell me of their own and their students' sense of newfound freedom in writing papers which record a search that has had meaning for them. For example, Bernadette M. Glaze, a Teacher-Consultant at the Northern Virginia Writing Project, wrote an 18-page, single-spaced story of teaching I-Search papers in American civilization at Lake Braddock Secondary School in Burke, Virginia. I call her report a "story" because it was written in the narrative form of an I-Search paper, proceeding naturally from: (1) what she knew and did not know about her topic when she started out; to (2) what she wanted to find out; to (3) the story of her search; to (4) what she learned. The point of using this archetypal story pattern in reports and research papers is that it shows the reader where the writer is coming from, whether it be a storehouse of experience or the height of naivete, and thus enables the reader better to judge the course and conclusions of the writer. In Bernadette Glaze's report she quotes some students' answers to her question (delivered before she returned the graded I-Search papers): "What would you tell a rising eleventh grader about I-Search?" Here are two students' responses:

- This paper is essentially a story of how and what you're finding out about a topic.
- It sounds like a lot to do an I-Search paper. Just forget about how long the final form will be; in fact, don't even think about it. First think of a subject—not just any subject but something that really interests you. Pick your subject with care, one that you don't know everything about. Then start the fun! See how creative you can get trying to figure new and different ways of searching out your topic. After you find something out, write it so you don't forget details. It's awful hard to sit down and write your whole search after you're done. Write a few sentences here and there—before you know it, you'll be done. Remember to keep a record of your sources.

Another teacher, Susan Bussard, a Fellow of the Northeast Texas Writing Project, described in the journal *English in Texas* (spring, 1981) her experience teaching the I-Search paper, and she quoted students' responses. One student noted, "The people I interviewed liked the idea because they knew I was really interested." Another recommended that "the I-Search should be mandatory for everyone to write at least once in life."

Again and again, the words *fun* and *easy* come up in students' comments. These words are not dignified enough for the conventional aims of education, although Alfred North Whitehead wrote a great deal about pleasure in his book *The Aims of Education*,[1] and the powerful searchers I have talked with outside school frequently speak of the fun they are having.

Most of the I-Search papers I have read from my classes and those of other teachers from around the country are easy and organic in form and have one authentic voice. The assignment carries with it a natural form that comes easily to a searcher. And since the assignment is the story of the writer in action, he or she does not need to cultivate a voice. It is there. Teachers who have assigned I-Search papers, including me, have been pleasantly shocked by the excellence of the writing. Almost never do we detect plagiarism because the project is weighted so heavily toward reporting the writer's searchings and talks with authorities. And almost never do we find *Engfish* (the pretentious word-wasting dialect of school) in the paper. For example, a mother returning to school wrote:

> I wonder if becoming an R.N. is worth disrupting our family life for two years. Jason is only two years old, and I would really love to be able to stay home with him. Preteenage Vanessa frequently needs a mother around, and my husband has often said he didn't marry to exchange notes on the refrigerator.

There are three poles in the I-Search: the student searcher, the authorities to be consulted, and the persons likely to read the paper. What determines the validity and appropriateness of the material discovered and reported is the particular needs of the searchers. Once their reasons for searching, their requirements, and their degree of knowledge are put down on paper, then what they give the reader from the authorities they have consulted or interviewed is charged—carries a current that lights a particular lamp. No readers will be likely to think that the findings are supposed to illuminate all of their world, or all of the world of others.

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[1] Alfred North Whitehead, *The Aims of Education*. New York: Free Press, a Division of Macmillan Publishing Co., Inc., 1967.

> *To write in their own voices about things that count in their lives is surely the basic step for students learning to write.*
>
> KEN MACRORIE

Properly directed, the I-Search is an exercise in intellectual modesty, a characteristic of most of the great inquirers.

The form of the I-Search enterprise is ancient, in some ways prehuman, like an animal hunting. "Tell the story of the hunt" is the instruction. Pompous ill-founded generalizing must be brought into such a paper by a great act of will. These kinds of statements are not inherent in the narrative of a quest dominated by face-to-face encounters with human beings talking about things dear to them.

One of Bernadette Glaze's students said, "This paper was a new experience in writing. It wasn't hard at all. Once I started writing, everything flowed right out. It sounded natural because I just wrote what I thought without having to translate into a higher vocabulary bracket."

An uneasy teacher might say, "But isn't that what school is for—to extend the use of students' language beyond the conversational?"

I am reminded of a paper I saw one summer by a visitor to the Teaching Writing Program at the Bread Loaf School of English, where I was teaching. In it Roger Shuy of Georgetown University pointed out that children learn to speak in stages, from intimate cooing with mother to casual and consultative talk and, eventually, to formal language. But in writing instruction in schools, children are expected immediately to jump to the formal level without first using the vernacular in narrative or in dialogue or in a special form Jana Staton of the Center for Applied Linguistics in Washington calls "complaining." To write in their own voices about things that count in their lives is surely the basic step for students learning to write.

Some I-Searchers have learned a great deal but have been content with one good source. They needed to search for several opposing views so that they would face the challenge of deciding among differing experts' opinions. But even this group has learned more from their searches than do most writers of conventional research papers.

Almost all the other weaknesses in papers, of whatever topic, have been traceable to an initial failure of students to choose a topic that represented a need rather than simply an interest. I believe this to be the crucial and most difficult point in aiding students to carry out an I-Search. The teacher must not allow an idle interest to become the motive for a search. "Something you *need* to find out in your life, however small or large," should be the ruling passion. But a teacher must persuade rather than dictate, for at the same time freedom to go after what counts for the writer rather than for the teacher is one of the pivots on which the whole project swings.

In reading papers written by my own students and those of many other teachers, I have usually been able to tell in the first paragraph whether or not the paper will be strong. "I've always been interested in handguns and so thought I would investigate the current controversy on banning and registering guns" does not sound like the beginning of a powerful I-Search paper. Such a beginning is usually composed by a student making the conventional school response to an assignment—guessing what the teacher wants him or her to be interested in. Or the student may be following the long traditions of phony scholarly detachment and not revealing his or her true needs. A meaningful search grows from seeds in the writer's life, which need to be revealed immediately to the reader. Perhaps the writer's father and mother have just battled rawly over the presence of a gun in their house. Or a boy has a collection of firearms, and his priest has told him he should get rid of it. Where there is no genuine need or itch to know, the search will be half-hearted or desultory and the paper vague and *Engfishy*.

The search must answer a question that fits the *I* who began it. In that particularity, then, the searching becomes thoughtful and the findings refined. The enterprise begins to parallel, if not to match, the hardheaded search of a professional. One of the most fascinating experiments in I-Search writing was carried out by Glenn Irvin, a Director of the Northeast Texas Writing Project. After his students had completed I-Search papers, he asked them to remove the *I* and all personal details and experiences and to write a second version as a conventional research paper. As the papers grew more abstract in statement, they became markedly shorter, and to my mind, lost their authority as well as liveliness. My first reaction was fright: Did this prove that the original I-Search papers, shorn of their personal qualities, were embarrassingly superficial? After sleeping on that question and looking again at the papers Glenn Irvin had sent me, I decided that the exercise proved something different: that conventional student research papers and I-Search papers without all the hopes, fears, attitudes, and experience of the *I* in them are half reports or less.

In the time available to high school and college freshman classes, students cannot thoroughly search a question or subject so as to speak authoritatively on it. In research paper assignments we are teaching students to pretend to unqualified authority and to pretend to have discovered something valuable (when almost all of them know they have not). I have always thought that if one is to look at a whole book or a long magazine article and excerpt material from it alone to present to someone else, the act is a charade. Lest anyone who has not read *Searching Writing* think that I am saying that the effort toward objectivity is not valuable, I want to stress that I speak rather against the extreme detachment from one's subject and the pretense of absolute objectivity characteristic of many student and professional research reports. In my chapters about the *Oxford English Dictionary*, the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, the *Reader's Guide to Periodical Literature*, Noah Webster and Samuel Johnson, and the history of spelling, I tried to break down students' hatred of the school library by showing that the people whose reference works they encounter there were frail and inconsistent at times, brilliant and accurate at others. I have not yet had much teacher or student response to that considerable part of the book, and I would like to receive more comments.

My book *Twenty Teachers* (Oxford University Press, 1985) is my I-Search into the question, "What is excellence in teaching?"

For all the responses to the I-Search project, I thank hundreds of teachers in the country. We have found that students do not have to approach a research project with aversion or numbness. We do not have to teach them to labor at a work that counts for no one, while investing it with clumsily crafted trappings of serious and consequential human inquiry. Rather than killing their curiosity, we can reawaken it by enabling them to produce searching writing that both we and they can respect.

EDITOR'S NOTE: For further information about Ken Macrorie's book, *The I-Search Paper*, one may contact Heinemann, Boynton Cook Publishers, Inc., 361 Hanover Street, Portsmouth, NH 03801-3959; telephone (603) 431-7894. Correspondence may be addressed to Ken Macrorie, Route 14, Box 257-A, Sante Fe, NM 87505.

Practical Ideas for Using the I-Search Paper

My Search

By Laurie Opfell
Former English Teacher, Irvine High School;
and Teacher/Consultant, UCI Writing Project

Scott was a teacher's nightmare. He did not walk into a room; he pushed, shoved, and kicked his way in, leaving behind a wake of at least five outraged students, who reacted by howling and throwing their books at him or running to tell me. He was constantly stealing—pens, backpacks, teachers' editions of textbooks, or the coffee creamer. He was not selective. Since in all the time I knew him he never once did an assignment, he naturally had a great deal of spare time to throw spitwads, make nasty suggestions to the girls, and make loud, obnoxious comments about anything and everything that went on in my classroom.

However, because Scott directed his hostility primarily toward the other students, he was actually easier to deal with than the ones who considered school a boring war with the teacher—private enemy number one. The ones who were openly defiant, who called me names under their breath, who accused me of losing their work, who threw tantrums if confronted by their unacceptable behavior—these were the ones I lost sleep over. As this was my first year of teaching, I found that all my ideals and enthusiasm about "the learning experience" seemed to be getting lost under this issue of control. I found myself feeling confused, angry, somewhat powerless, and totally outraged over this onslaught of emotional behavior. I could not imagine how or why I was allowing this group of thirteen-year-olds to terrorize my life, but one thing I did know was that teaching could be an intense and often painful experience.

When I decided to do an I-Search paper along with my eighth grade English class, a topic readily occurred to me: frustration in teaching. After deciding to go on a quest of my own, I identified three questions that I knew I needed some answers to:

1. What made the students show so many negative behaviors?
2. What made me respond in stress-producing ways?
3. What could I do to handle their behavior more constructively?

As I went through the various stages of the search, I found myself enjoying the opportunity to find some solutions to problems that were bothering me. I interviewed the school counselor and the assistant principal on the topics of coping with student behavior, understanding games the students play, and maintaining discipline in class. I was quite pleased to get some humorous and practical advice that really worked. I studied various psychologists' views on adolescent behavior and gained some relevant information. After typing my research, I read it and tried to decide what to say in my conclusion.

I found that I had answered each of my questions but that, in the process, I had learned some fairly disturbing things about myself. One was the concept that we dislike most in others what is also hidden somewhere in ourselves. This meant that the emotional, irrational, attention-getting behavior of the students was also there, in some form, in myself. This was an uncomfortable idea that I had to admit was true. I also learned that adolescents who show especially outrageous behavior are often stuck at a painful stage in the growth process. In some ways being stuck was something I could look back and see in my own life.

Finally, I learned that all adolescents are expected to answer the questions "Who am I?" and "Where am I going?" to reach successful maturity. These are difficult questions that I realized I had not answered myself. I came away from the finished report feeling that there were some important unfinished issues still left to be dealt with. But I was now better able to deal with them. I had gained a new self-awareness and a sense of compassion for the struggles of my students.

When I compare my first year of teaching in an intermediate school to this year, I realize that I still have a few Scotts and a few who direct their rebellion at me, but somehow they do not seem intimidating. I know that it is my search that has made the difference.

A Sample Prompt, Scoring Guide, and Model Paper for the I-Search

By Carol Booth Olson

Director, UCI Writing Project

I first learned about the I-Search paper at a California Writing Project Conference in Monterey. Allan Edwards, a consultant from the Redwood Writing Project, had been experimenting with the concept that Ken Macrorie would introduce later that year in a book called *Searching Writing*.[1] He was so excited about the results he was getting that I decided to try the idea.

What I like best about the I-Search assignment is that it encourages research that the student conducts out of a genuine need to know. So often, the

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[1] *Searching Writing* in a later edition was titled *The I-Search Paper*. See Ken Macrorie, *The I-Search Paper* (Revised edition). Portsmouth, N.H.: Boynton Cook Publishers, Inc., 1988.

All things are to be examined and called into question. There are no limits set to thought.

EDITH HAMILTON

traditional research paper is a passive enterprise in which the student merely analyzes and restates the results of someone else's intellectual inquiry, an inquiry that he or she may have no personal involvement in. When I think of research, I think of more than a visit to the card catalog and weekends spent in the library stacks. I think of firsthand activities—such as writing letters, making telephone calls, initiating face-to-face interviews, and going on field trips—supplemented by the valuable information that can be obtained from pertinent journals and books.

I agree with Ken Macrorie that the dictionary definition of research as a "patient study and investigation in some field of knowledge, undertaken to establish facts and principles" leaves out "the basic motivation for the whole effort" (*Searching Writing*, p. 162). My students are rarely patient about anything. I would rather have them get so involved in a topic that they launch their search for information in several different directions simultaneously than have them become bored before they begin, dragging their bodies down to the library, simply going through the motions of searching. Because the students have a stake in this paper, I find that after the initial excitement of getting started, they will sit down and take an objective look at what needs to be done and avail themselves of all the accessible secondary sources.

Using Allan Edward's handouts and Ken Macrorie's book, I developed a prompt describing the I-Search paper, which I distribute to students along with a scoring guide delineating criteria for evaluation and a model student paper. Samples of all three items follow.

A Sample Prompt

The I-Search Paper

DESCRIPTION

The I-Search paper is designed to teach the writer and the reader something valuable about a chosen topic and about the nature of searching and discovery. As opposed to the standard research paper in which the writer usually assumes a detached and objective stance, the I-Search paper allows you to take an active role in your search, to hunt for facts and truths firsthand, and to provide a step-by-step record of the discovery process.

TOPIC

The cardinal rule of the I-Search paper is to choose a topic that genuinely interests you and that you need to know more about. The following titles reveal topics that previous students have written about: "Not Exactly the Brady Brunch: Understanding and Resolving the Tension in Step Families"; "Reaching Out to Orange County's Invisible Poor"; "Diabetes: What's the Prognosis?"; "Auuuggghh! An Exploration of Stress and Burn-Out"; "Should I Invest in the Silver Market?" The important point is that you choose the topic you will investigate rather than having the instructor select a topic or even provide a number of options.

FORMAT

The I-Search paper should be written in three sections: (1) What I know, assume, or imagine; (2) The search; and (3) What I discovered.

What I know, assume, or imagine. Before conducting any formal research, write a section in which you explain to the reader what you think you know, what you assume, or what you imagine about your topic. For example, if you decided to investigate teenage alcoholism, you might want to offer some ideas about the causes of teenage alcoholism, provide an estimate of the severity of the problem, and create a portrait of a typical teenage drinker, and so on.

The search. Test your knowledge, assumptions, or conjectures by researching your topic thoroughly. Consult useful books, magazines, newspapers, films, tapes, and other sources for information. When possible, interview people who are authorities on or who are familiar with your topic. If you were pursuing a search on teenage alcoholism, you might want to check out a book on the subject, read several pertinent articles in a variety of current magazines, make an appointment to visit a rehabilitation center for alcoholics, attend a meeting of Al-Anon or Alcoholics Anonymous, and consult an alcoholism counselor. You might also ask a number of teenagers from different social and economic backgrounds what their firsthand exposure to alcohol has been and whether they perceive any alcohol problems among their peers.

Write your search in narrative form, recording the steps of the discovery process. Do not feel obligated to tell everything, but highlight the happenings and facts you uncovered that were crucial to your hunt and contributed to your understanding of the topic. Document all your sources of information, using formal footnote form when it is appropriate.

What I discovered. After concluding your search, compare what you thought you knew, assumed, or imagined with what you actually discovered; and offer some personal commentary and draw some conclusions. For instance, after completing your search on teenage alcoholism, you might learn that the problem is far more severe and often begins at an earlier age than you formerly believed. You may have assumed that parental neglect was a key factor in the incidence of teenage alcoholism, but you now find that peer pressure is the prime contributing factor. Consequently, you might want to propose that an alcoholism awareness and prevention program, including peer counseling sessions, be instituted in the public school system as early as the sixth grade.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

At the close of the report, attach a formal bibliography listing the sources you consulted to write your I-Search paper.

A Scoring Guide[1]

9—8 This paper is clearly superior. It is well written, clearly organized, insightful, and technically correct. A 9—8 paper exhibits most or all of the following characteristics:

- Writing the paper was a genuine learning experience for the writer, and a person would benefit greatly from reading the paper.
- The paper displays evidence of critical thinking and offers special insight into the topic discussed.
- The topic lends itself to investigation and discovery.
- The paper is written in three sections. (The format may be explicit or implicit.):
    - What I know, assume, or imagine (prior to the search)
    - The search (testing knowledge, assumptions, or conjecture through documented research)
    - What I discovered (comparing what you thought you knew with what you learned and offering commentary and conclusions)
- The author takes an active role rather than a passive role in the search.
- The writer uses research effectively as a supplement to, but not as a substitute for, his or her own ideas.
- The paper's tone and point of view convey a clear sense of the author's voice or style.
- The writer uses precise, apt, or descriptive language.
- The main points of the essay are well supported with examples.
- The writer uses ample transitions between ideas, paragraphs, and sections.
- The writer varies sentence structure and length.
- The search portion of the essay is properly documented with footnotes in correct form.
- The paper includes references to a minimum of two primary and two secondary research sources.
- The paper includes a formal bibliography.
- The writer generally uses effectively the conventions of written English.

7 This paper is a thinner version of the 9—8 paper. A paper rated 7 is still impressive and interesting, but it is less thoroughly researched, more loosely organized, less insightful, and not as informative as the 9—8 paper.

6—5 Scores of 5 or 6 apply to papers that are less well handled than the 7, 8, or 9 paper. A 6—5 paper may be less interesting and informative, more superficially researched, and less insightful. It may contain problems in the conventions of written English. A 6—5 paper will exhibit some or all of the following characteristics:

- Writing the paper was a learning experience for the writer; but the paper is less informative than the 7, 8, or 9 paper, and thus, the lesson is less valuable for the reader.
- The paper does not display as much critical thinking or insight as the 7, 8, or 9 paper.
- The paper is written in three sections, but they are not equally complete or well handled.
- The author does not seem genuinely involved in his or her topic.
- The writer may rely too heavily on the research rather than use it to augment his or her own thoughts.

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[1] *NOTE.* This scoring guide can be modified according to the grade level that you teach.

- The paper does not convey a clear sense of the author's voice or style.
- The language is not as descriptive, precise, or apt as that of a 7, 8, or 9 paper.
- The main points of the report are not as well supported with examples as they might have been.
- The three sections of the report are not tied together effectively with transitions.
- The sentence structure and length need more variation.
- The writer uses very few footnotes, indicating that little research has been conducted and the bibliography is sketchy.
- The paper does not refer directly to at least two primary and two secondary research sources.
- Some problems in the conventions of written English occur but none that seriously impairs the message.

4—3 These scores apply to papers that maintain the general idea of the writing assignment, but they are weak in content, thought, language facility, or the conventions of written English. A 4—3 paper will exhibit some or all of these characteristics:

- Writing the paper was not a genuine learning experience for the writer. A person would not benefit from reading the paper.
- The paper demonstrates little or no evidence of critical thinking.
- The paper is not written in three sections, or the sections do not follow the guidelines set up in the assignment's description.
- The writer either relies too heavily on research or conducts very little, if any, research.
- The writer's "voice" does not come across.
- The language is vague and imprecise.
- The discussion is overly general or superficial.
- The main points are not supported with examples.
- The research sources are not documented in the bibliography or footnotes.
- The reader may have a problem understanding the paper.
- The paper has serious problems in the conventions of written English that impair the writer's message.

2 This score applies to papers that do not follow the writing assignment and contain weakness of the paper rated 4—3.

1 This score applies to a paper that is completely off track and has no redeeming qualities.

An extremely well-written and well-prepared paper may receive a rating of 10. If a paper has serious problems in the conventions of written English that impair the writer's message, it can receive up to a two-point deduction.

A Model Student Paper

Caren Rice, English 1 A (Olson),
Irvine Valley College

Canine Parovirus

Just recently, I experienced the pain and trauma of almost losing a loved pet. Mandy was only a four and one-half month old puppy when, on a Friday night in October, she was suddenly struck with a severe illness.

The sickness first began with the loss of her appetite, followed by severe, convulsive vomiting. This went on for 24 hours, when I decided to call the emergency pet clinic.

"What are the dog's symptoms?" asked the nurse.

"Constant vomiting, loss of appetite, and lethargy," I replied.

"Does she have diarrhea?"

"No, not at all."

"Oh, thank goodness! She isn't showing the symptoms of parvo. Just give her some Pepto Bismol, and she'll be fine in a few hours."

Well, Mandy was given the antacid, and she still wasn't "fine." I thought perhaps that my eyes were betraying me, but in the short time that she had been sick, Mandy looked as if she had lost half of her weight. Her eyes were bright red and to walk took all of her effort and strength. She refused to eat and drink.

This was only the beginning of what was to be a sleepless, heartsick week and an eye-opener to the deadly dog-killing disease known as canine parvovirus.

What Is Parvo?

With a heavy heart and a guilty feeling, I took Mandy to the vet on Monday. I had heard of this disease and of the vaccine being given to ward it off. But I didn't take it seriously enough. I assumed that Mandy wouldn't get parvo since all of our neighbors' dogs had been vaccinated against the illness. Where else could she get it? Little did I know that Mandy could contract the disease just from walking on the grass outside our door. This was the beginning of my education on parvovirus.

Canine parvovirus was first identified at a Louisville, Kentucky, dog show in the spring of 1978 and spread to other dog shows throughout the country.[1] As a result of these dog shows, the disease soon spread overseas to Europe and Australia. Parvo was thought to have been a mutation of cat distemper, though it did not seem to affect cats in the same way. According to Dr. Martin Levin, scientists of veterinary medicine are still not sure what causes this almost always fatal disease.[2]

The question remains: How did canine parvovirus suddenly appear? The *Australian Veterinary Journal* has suggested openly that a contaminated batch of vaccine was responsible for the mutant virus.[3] Many doctors disagree with this theory because serial production lots of the vaccine are routinely monitored by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, which has yet to find a bad batch.

Now we are back to the same question: How did Parvo suddenly appear? From what I could gather at the clinic where Mandy was being treated, they still know very little about this disease.

Parvo and Its Cure

By Tuesday, it was confirmed that Mandy definitely had parvo, and her chance of survival was 15 percent. This really depressed me. I wanted to know why, what, and how. I pressed the doctor for more information.

"My knowledge is limited on this disease," he told me.

I asked him if he thought that Mandy would survive. Dr. Levin said that it was hard to determine. They knew that she had intestinal parvo, which if it could be called a plus, was one.

There are two known types of canine parvovirus. One is intestinal parvo. This virus grows in the intestinal tract of the dog, causing severe vomiting, loss of appetite, and diarrhea.[4] This can last for several weeks before the dog dies of malnutrition and exhaustion. If the disease is caught in its early stages, there is a chance of stopping it from spreading further, and a good chance of saving the animal. Mandy had suffered with the illness for 48 hours before I took her to the vet.

The other type of this disease is cardiovascular parvovirus. This virus starts in the arteries of the dog's heart and can kill the animal in as short a time as eight hours. The cardiac parvo is what usually strikes the very young puppies. The chance of survival of this form of parvo is almost zero.

Before veterinarians and pet owners became familiar with parvovirus, the mortality rate reached 40 percent among dogs with serious cases of the disease.[5] Puppies under ten weeks and older dogs are the most vulnerable.

Since parvo was first identified in the warmer months of spring and summer, it was hoped that perhaps cold weather would bring an end to the disease. But parvo proved to be a hardy virus, unaffected by temperatures.

When this disease began to break out in near epidemic proportions, many pet owners kept their dogs close to home, afraid that a trip to the vet might put a healthy animal in dangerous proximity to one carrying the virus.[6] Most pet owners, such as I, were naive to the fact that the shoes we wore could carry the virus into the house via contact with the feces of an infected animal.

Therapy is basically palliative—drugs to control vomiting and diarrhea, and fluids to prevent dehydration.[7] Without treatment, dogs often die of parvovirus within three days. It is one of the quickest killers of dogs known.

This was the therapy given to Mandy, as by Wednesday she still had not taken in any food or water, and her weight was dropping rapidly. I kept in close contact with Dr. Levin, and he, in turn, informed me of the effects of the disease on her. Her condition was stable, and despite loss of weight, there was a remote possibility that she would survive. After five days of being caught in a dark tunnel, I could see a spot of light in the distance.

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[1] Jean Seligman, "A Viral Epidemic Without a Cure," *Newsweek* (August 19, 1980), 57.

[2] Martin Levin, Doctor of Veterinary Medicine, El Toro Animal Hospital, El Toro, Calif., December 11, 1980.

[3] Mike Macbeth, "Dogs, That Virus Is Still Loose," *McCall's* (March 3, 1980), 14.

[4] Seligman, 57.

[5] Ibid.

[6] Ibid.

[7] Martin Levin, December 11, 1980.

The best protection against parvo is a new vaccine called parvocine. The lab that is producing it is working around the clock, turning out 1.5 million doses a month.[8] But there are 3 million doses on back order as clinics across the nation are operating at full capacity.

The vaccine does not cause immunity to parvo. Booster shots must be given every four to six months. It is not known just how effective the vaccine is, but there have been fewer cases of illness in immunized dogs than in ones that went untreated.

A Summary of Parvo

By Thursday, Mandy began to show signs of recovery. She became more responsive to the treatment and ate a small amount of food. I was told that if all went well, I could bring her home on Friday. I breathed a sigh of relief and thanked my lucky stars.

Mandy was one of the few dogs that survived this ravaging disease. The symptoms were still in their early stages when I brought her in and, therefore, the disease could be stopped from spreading further. When I picked her up on Friday, she was extremely thin, having lost half of her weight. But Mandy was alive and very glad to see me.

I can now reflect on the situation and realize how little we, as pet owners, know about our pets and their illnesses. We tend to take for granted that dogs are always healthy and need no help from us when they are sick. I realize now just how severely harsh diseases can affect our pets, especially when they cannot communicate their pain to us.

I am now well informed on canine parvovirus and through my own experience have learned a valuable lesson. The vaccine only costs about $7 to $14, but I chose not to buy it out of my own ignorance. Instead, I suffered a week of fear at the thought of losing my dog and a bill from the vet totaling over $140.

I cannot recommend highly enough that teachers of writing who are unfamiliar with the I-Search paper learn more about it and assign it on a trial basis in at least one of their classes. When students personalize research and bring everything they know about writing to their project, they produce some of their best work. In addition, they often discover something that is far more valuable to them than a letter grade or a numerical score.

The I-Search Paper: A Perfect Compromise

By Susanna Clemans
English Instructor, Cerritos College;
and Teacher/Consultant, UCI Writing Project

Feeling somewhat guilty about never having assigned a research paper to my students in English composition at California State University, Fullerton, because of a lack of time and my own dread of having to read the boring topics, I seized on Ken Macrorie's I-Search paper as the perfect compromise.

Luckily for me and my students, Carol Olson's handout (which is included in her commentary in this section) was extremely clear-cut and complete. While skimming the syllabus with my students on the first day of classes, I explained briefly that this paper (not due until the last week of the course) would be a modified research paper that would be explained in fuller detail with handouts and examples as the semester progressed. I could see the raised eyebrows and hear the barely audible groans. Something about a research paper seemed to induce these predictable displays. Was I wrong in tackling this paper along with all the other required compositions?

By the third or fourth week of the course, I spent time in class discussing the paper, read some

> *For me the best part of this assignment was that I actually looked forward to reading the students' papers that were filled with their enthusiastic searches.*
>
> SUSANNA CLEMANS

EDITOR'S NOTE: For a more detailed account of how to implement the I-Search concept in the classroom, see this author's article, "Personalizing Research in the I-Search Paper," in the November, 1983, issue of the *Arizona English Bulletin*. Portions of this commentary have been reprinted from that article. An additional resource is "Out of a Genuine Need to Know: Personalizing the Research Paper," in *Thinking/Writing: Fostering Critical Thinking Through Writing*. Edited by Carol Booth Olson. New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1992.

[8] Seligman, 57.

examples of I-Search papers, and asked the students to begin seriously considering a topic, one which they knew comparatively little about, but one which they wanted to pursue. One by one, topics were given to me as possibilities, and in spite of themselves, the students began to get caught up with their searches. These questions and discussions continued throughout the semester: "You mean I can use *I* ?" "I don't have to give you a formal outline?" Relief permeated the class, and the most overheard question now became, "What are you doing your paper on?"

The "Saturation Report" (one of the required essays assigned the second month), interview sessions in and out of class, exercises in dialogue, and the various kinds of essays—narration, description, persuasion, classification, and so on—helped give students the confidence necessary for embarking on a new venture. By the time my students had completed the "Saturation Report" and discovered how they could apply different types of writing skills to the I-Search paper, they became very enthusiastic about the assignment.

Of course, my students, being human, were a mixture of those who worked hard and thoroughly as well as those who procrastinated. Yet all the students turned in an I-Search paper, and, interestingly enough, no one wrote on the same subject. Many students personally told me how much they benefited from the assignment, even though they resented the extra work in the beginning. For many this assignment was the first time they had really enjoyed looking for information because they did not have to worry about an overly structured format. Others felt the choice of subject matter finally allowed them to spend their valuable time earnestly searching out an interest, such as diabetes (in the case of the student who had just found out she had the disease) or mining (in the case of the student whose mother had just remarried to a miner).

The best teachers of teachers are other teachers who are believable as consultants because their ideas and the specific teaching strategies they demonstrate have been developed with real students in real classrooms.

JAMES R. GRAY

For me the best part of this assignment was that I actually looked forward to reading the students' papers that were filled with their enthusiastic searches. And the students, who had enjoyed their superior position in almost always knowing more about their individual subjects after the search than I, had gained confidence in a mode of writing that will be useful to them in other classes. The compromise research paper worked.

Research Made Fun: Students' Responses to the I-Search Paper

By Joan Bower

English Instructor, Saddleback Community College;
and Teacher/Consultant,
UCI Writing Project

You know something? I had to narrow my focus down again! But I found this guy who gave me all this information, and he talked to me for an hour."

"I'm really learning about this Beverly Hills diet! I interviewed three girls yesterday who'd gotten sick on it even. This is so much more fun than just reading books from the library!"

"I almost feel like committing suicide! Well—not really. But after trying to phone the suicide crisis line for three days just to see how they'd react, I'm frustrated. The super 'run-around' and busy signals would drive anyone crazy! No wonder so many kids give up!"

Just what kind of assignment provoked such remarks? It was my first experiment with the I-Search paper. Although I had always spent time on controversial subjects to stimulate interesting topics for persuasive research in freshman composition courses, one semester I decided to change the emphasis and stress a first-person approach to research.

The result proved to be a smashing success. Students became aware of numerous resources beyond the marvels of the library. One student said, "I really enjoyed looking up sources in the library, then contacting that one author by phone. I'd never have found my major field of emphasis for the next four years without his long-distance advice." In addition, the difference between primary and secondary sources sharpened. "Doing the actual experiments with the Ouija board sure made the book's information easier to verify. The firsthand research seemed so much better," an experienced encyclopedia researcher observed. Best of all, persuasive research papers proved to be enjoyable and educational for almost everyone involved. The comments from some of the first-time researchers included these:

> Writing about the bad effects of smoking so my family would know really made this paper worthwhile. I'm sure my brothers will learn something, too.
>
> Interviewing other older women about their college enrollments really strengthened my determination to forge ahead. I realize I'm not alone either!
>
> After I talked to those guys in jail and some of my neighbors, I really hope now that I don't end up beating my wife someday. All of the men I interviewed had been abused children just like I was.

Because of all the enthusiasm on the part of students, plus the fascinating diversity of subject matter generated by the I Search, I decided to continue to use the assignment in future classes. My students made the following suggestions for implementing it the second time:

- Encourage the use of the first person whenever possible, but do not exclude an objectively written final draft if the paper is to be presented in another course as well.
- Require that a topic lend itself to persuasion so that the paper is not just a "learning about" experience.
- Require at least two authentic interviews to preclude the use of most previously written or purchased papers.
- Provide ample time in class for careful and thoughtful recommendations about classmates' papers during the "What I Think I Know" and rough draft read-arounds. (For a description of the read-around technique and suggestions on its use, see Jenee Gossard's article that appears in the "Sharing/Responding" section of this book.)
- Emphasize the value of careful proofreading.

Yes, the I-Search paper is a true learning experience. I say this because my students recommended it as the most beneficial assignment of the course.

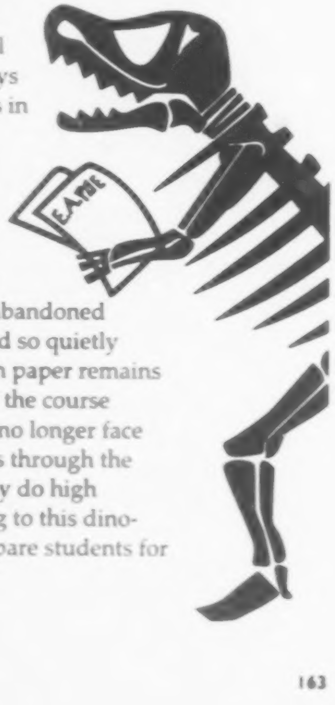
The Extinction of Termpapasaurus Rex: The Rise of Text-Based Research

By Carol Jago

English Teacher, Santa Monica City High School,
Santa Monica City Unified School District;
and Director, UCLA Literature Project

The dread research paper appears in the course description of most high school English classes, usually scheduled into a four- to six-week time frame. Students spend much of this time doing carefully structured busywork. Attention to form and product is primary. Motivation? Well, students choose their own topics, don't they? Besides, high school students have always written term papers in the spring.

After reading more papers than I care to recall on "how dolphins communicate" and Edgar Allan Poe, I abandoned the assignment. I did so quietly because the research paper remains in the small print of the course outline, but I could no longer face putting my students through the pointless paces. Why do high school teachers cling to this dinosaur? It doesn't prepare students for



The typical high school research paper simply wastes too much time for too little learning. In my classroom, the Termpapasaurus rex *is definitely extinct.*

CAROL JAGO

the analytic writing demanded in freshman college courses. It doesn't develop fluency; my students wrote less, not more, while working on term papers. Neither were they reading very much, despite the tonnage they checked out from the library. They were too busy copying passages onto index cards, three-by-five only, please. Why, I finally asked myself, are we doing this?

Parents like the assignment. The finished product looks so tidy—just like the papers they used to write. Never mind that the papers are made up of awkwardly spliced pieces from widely varied sources and the most voiceless, godawful prose the students generate all year. Certainly, I want students to know how to find answers to real questions, and I know the value of products for closure; but the typical high school research paper simply wastes too much time for too little learning.

To replace this project, I substituted research based on a text we study in class. First, we gathered questions. After we had finished reading Maxine Hong Kingston's *Woman Warrior*, I met my students in the library and asked them what was still puzzling to them about the story—what else did they want to know about the times, the place, the woman? These tenth graders were bursting with questions; and, as fast as I could write, I charted them on a large piece of paper we could save for reference. They wanted to know more about Chinese superstitions; they wanted to know if the attitudes toward girls had changed in contemporary China; they wondered how the combination of science and magic worked in hospitals. We filled the sheet with possible research questions—all theirs.

Students had been working in groups as we read the novel, and I had them continue in these same groups for their research projects. Their first task was to negotiate a single question to research and then to decide which strategies would be useful for finding what they needed to know. I checked their work and then set them loose to storm the library shelves for answers. They also interviewed "experts" like Chinese grandmothers. Because the questions were all related to a single text, groups could help other groups that were stuck. Collaboration abounded. The library was abuzz with productive, engaged researchers.

My instructions for the form that the report should take were purposely vague, and I did not give my students more than a few days to complete the project. I wanted their research while it was hot. I did insist that the groups in some way report their findings to the class. Some products took the form of charts; others, skits, and some, papers that were read. The nature of the findings dictated the form.

Often, the research and report were both strongly influenced by the specific needs of the students in the group. For example, one group wondered about the traditional position of women in the family unit. They wrote:

> The position of women within the family was not equal. A girl being born was not greeted with as much joy as a boy. A new bride entering her husband's family found herself in a bad position. She could expect problems from her mother-in-law, and since she had probably met her husband for the first time at their wedding, she could expect little, if any, support there. Luckily, her situation would improve when she gave birth to a son and even more so when her son got married. Then she herself would be a mother-in-law.

Students researched what they wanted to know. Another group wrote to Maxine Hong Kingston and found out she would be visiting our area soon to promote her new book. They were there!

Evaluating these reports made much better educational sense to me than checking footnotes on papers typed by parents' secretaries. I believe that these students came away from the assignment with a feel for what real research is about—finding answers to questions. I was also happy because we had more class time for the serious business of reading and writing. In my classroom, the *Termpapasaurus rex* is definitely extinct.

EDITOR'S NOTE: We are grateful to the California Association of Teachers of English (CATE) for permission to reprint this article, which appeared in its March/April, 1990, issue of *California English*.

"I-Search a Word": Reclaiming the Library's Reference Section

By Gaylyn Anderson
English Teacher, Reed High School, Sparks, Nevada;
and Teacher/Consultant, Northern Nevada Writing Project
and UCI Writing Project

Midway through a poem by Mark Van Doren I had just discovered, I felt a gentle tap on my shoulder.

"Would you please help me with *Granger's Index to Poetry?*" asked Arantza, an exchange student from Spain.[1] I've found *freedom* in this subject part, but how do I find a poem?"

I looked around the library. Students were clustered over reference books, a few standing, most sitting. Some were chatting. Some were working alone. Michelle, with *Granger's* open in her hands, was heading for the stacks. I called her over and asked her to help Arantza find a poem in *Granger's* and then locate it in an anthology. Michelle agreed, and they were off in search of *freedom*.

The students are used to helping each other in our interactive classroom. To serve as each other's experts is only natural in this research assignment, which encourages students to discover knowledge together. The "I-Search a Word" exercise uses techniques that introduce students to a thorough exploration of many aspects of a single word in the English language. The only assignment of its type in my composition curriculum, it requires that the students take careful notes on both the information they uncover and the processes they use and then integrate their interpretations, their reflections, and the records of their personal searches into rather lengthy final papers, of which they are generally quite proud.

Breathing Life into a Research Assignment

I created the I-Search a Word several years ago in response to my own need to develop a mini-research paper for a composition class. I had taught versions of Ken Macrorie's "I-Search" paper to seniors, and I liked the concept *and* the product. Teaching vocabulary, in general, seemed not only unproductive in terms of real learning but also boring to both the students and the teacher. Why not, I thought, devise an assignment which would immerse the students in language study, enable them to feel its richness, get them to the library, teach them a little poetry, and reinforce the notion of learning as discovery, an individual quest for knowledge?

I decided that I would attempt an extended definition of an abstract word, a challenging project, given the cognitive tasks inherent in the assignment and the reluctance inherent in the nature of many of these students. Definition, for most students, is a most demanding writing assignment. According to Edward Jenkinson and Donald Seybold, authors of *Writing as a Process of Discovery: Some Structured Theme Assignments for Grades Five Through Twelve*:[2]

> It is extremely difficult for anyone to define a word that does not have objective, physical referents. Yet

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[1] *Granger's Index to Poetry* (Sixth edition). Edited by William J. Smith. New York: Columbia University Press, 1973.

[2] Edward B. Jenkinson and Donald A. Seybold, *Writing as a Process of Discovery: Some Structured Theme Assignments for Grades Five Through Twelve*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1970, p. 124.

the ideas, feelings, and emotions that are most significant in our lives are conveyed through words that have no single physical referent. Many of the concepts that abstract words designate exist only in the minds of men. Hence, everyone who uses such words as *freedom*, *rich*, or *love* has slightly different notions about what those words mean, and it is not uncommon to find people who do not know exactly what they mean when they use many abstract words. In spite of this, we frequently act as if we are talking about the same thing when we use such words. We assume we know what words mean when we sometimes don't; we even fight wars over ideologies, yet we are hard-pressed to tell another person in any specific way what it is we are fighting for or against.

It is important that we understand what we are really asking a student to do when we ask him to define an abstract term.

The Basic "I-Search a Word" Assignment

1. Make arrangements with the librarian for your students to work in the library for at least three days. The students will need some sort of orientation to the reference books you choose to work with.
2. Work with the librarian so that the resources listed in the student's directions and others you might wish to add are easily accessible.
3. Prepare (or, preferably, brainstorm with the students) a list of 30 words which express something intangible; for example, envy, joy, kindness, love, revenge, hatred, energy, jealousy, success, freedom, knowledge.
4. Provide each student with a copy of the directions in figures 1 and 2.

> *The students feel a sense of accomplishment for meeting head-on a real challenge: making sense out of the small print in those heavy, strange books, most of which they've never seen or heard of.*
>
> GAYLYN ANDERSON

Researching the Word

From the list, choose one word that you think you can live with for at least two weeks.

Be sure to write down the book title, author or editor, and page number for each of the sources. You might want to use a separate piece of paper or note card for each word to allow space for notes on your search and on the interpretation of your word. This procedure also allows for easier organization of your sources when you write your paper.

You may complete these activities in any order, using other sources if time permits.

- Look up your word in an unabridged dictionary. Copy the word's etymology and its first definition. Photocopy or copy by hand the remaining definitions.
- Look up your word in a thesaurus. Copy the first group of synonyms and all the boldfaced words. You might need these synonyms as substitutes for your word if you run into difficulty finding your original word in some of the sources.
- Look up your word in a concordance to the Bible. Find a verse which contains your word; then look up that verse in the Bible. Copy your verse *and* the verse before and after it.
- Look up your word in a concordance to Shakespeare. Find a passage which contains your word; then look up that passsage in any of the complete works of Shakespeare. Copy the whole speech which contains your word *and* the speech before and after it. Include the speaker's name, act, scene, and line number.
- Look up your word in *Granger's Index to Poetry*. Using one of the poetry anthologies in your library, find and copy a poem which contains your word.
- Look up your word in a book of quotations. Copy a quotation in which your word appears, including all identifying information.
- Look up your word in the *Readers' Guide to Periodical Literature*. Find a magazine article that deals with your word. Locate the article, if available, in your school library. Read and summarize the article.
- Look up your word in the *Oxford English Dictionary*. Copy the first paragraph for your word; then photocopy or copy by hand the rest of the information on your word. Try to determine the history of your word and describe some of the changes it has gone through over the years. Pinpoint some interesting aspect of your word or of this particular reference book or both.

Figure 1. *I-Search a Word* Student's Directions

Writing the Paper

Organizing Your Paper

This paper is as much about the *process* of discovering your word as it is about your word itself. You can use "I" in this paper. Shown below is one possible way to organize your paper. However, this is *your* paper; I encourage you to choose a method of organization which best "shows off" the information you have gathered and allows you to integrate that information with your interpretation, personal insights, and experience with this search into an effective paper. Remember, your voice will unify the whole paper.

Introduction: Paragraph 1: Write the most interesting thing you discovered about your word itself.

Paragraph 2: Tell the story of your overall search for information about your word. Be sure to describe any difficulties you encountered in making your search.

Body: Paragraphs 3–10: Write one or more paragraphs on each source, including your summary of the information, your interpretation of that information, and your personal comment on what you found. In each paragraph be sure to include complete information about your source: book title, author or editor, and page number. Remember, you are reporting what you have learned.

Conclusion: Final paragraph: Write your response to this project. What did you learn? Did you like the method? Were you frustrated? Did you amaze yourself with your ability to handle reference books and write such an impressive paper?

Developing a Bibliography

Your teacher will provide you with a form to follow in writing the bibliography.

Submitting the Paper

When you turn in this research package, it should include all of your notes, photocopies, rough drafts, and the final copy of your paper.

Figure 2. *I-Search a Word* Student's Directions

The Students' Response

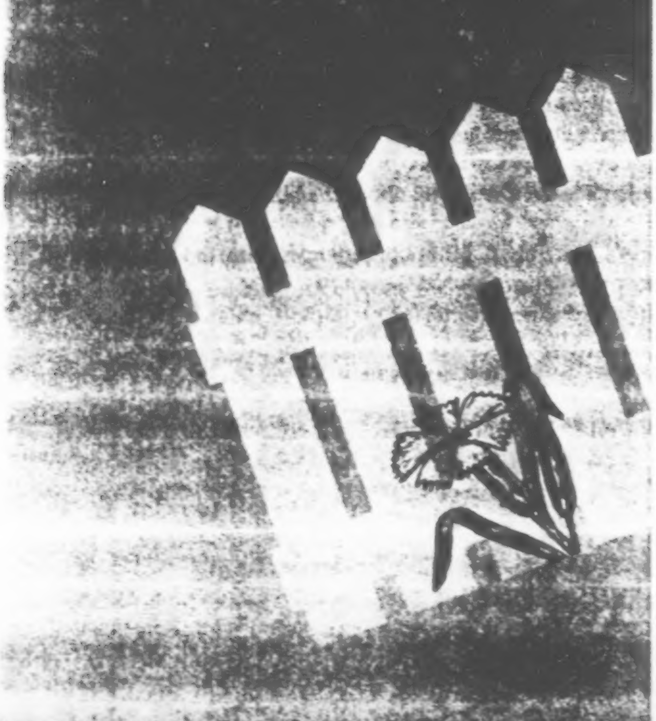
The students approach the task with diligence and determination and, generally, they enjoy it. Why? The responses vary. Most students like the "I-Search a Word" because it gets them out of the classroom and allows them choice in their topic. They feel a sense of accomplishment for meeting head-on a real challenge: making sense out of the small print in those heavy, strange books, most of which they've never seen or heard of.

Realistically speaking, the majority of the students would never see or hear of many of these sources, except through an assignment such as this. And because some of what they read is either technical or out of context, and that situation is acknowledged, the students are willing to make a stab at understanding because they don't feel the imminent threat of failure. This knowledge frees them to make sense of their research on their own terms, for *their* particular purposes.

They also seem to like the notion that they are allowed to express their opinions, both on their findings and on the assignment itself. And they are generally amazed at their rather impressive papers that are full of quotes from exotic sources that they have personally examined. In the process the students learn something about the library and their language. Most, in the end, admit that it wasn't a terribly painful, boring experience; in fact, they see it as worthwhile—even fun!

EDITOR'S NOTE: We are grateful to the *English Journal* for permission to reprint this article, which appeared in its January, 1990, issue. ©1990 by the National Council of Teachers of English.

Critical Thinking and Writing



Reforming Your Teaching for Thinking: The Studio Approach

By Dan Kirby
Professor, Teaching and Teacher Education,
University of Arizona, Tucson

Reforming your teaching to nurture thinking involves more than dreaming up new activities or offering students more decision-making freedom. At the heart of this reform is a new attitude toward knowledge and how it is acquired. This new view of knowledge does not mean you have nothing to teach students or that textbooks are no longer important or that old knowledge is no longer valuable. What it does mean is that teachers must plan for and structure their classes in ways that give students many opportunities to construct their own versions of old knowledge in new and more personal ways. But there is even more at stake here than preparing students to make meanings of what is already known. It is more than acquisition that we are after. We want our students to create new knowledge both now and in the future and be able to do something with that knowledge after they have it. Changing your class to make this happen may at first plunge you into an abyss of uncertainty, as Barbara Elmore, a biology teacher at Jones High School in the Houston Independent School District, relates:

> I thought I was pretty good at critical thinking skills. I knew Bloom's taxonomy; I had written curriculum for Houston Independent School District; and I taught science. I knew I was going to be really good at teaching this thinking stuff. But it wasn't that easy for me. At first I felt as if I was plunged into total darkness. I am a highly organized teacher, a real paper pusher, and this kind of teaching was asking me to let go, to let go of control. I'm the kind of teacher who knows where she wants every child to be at every moment. Finally, in frustration, I just turned to my kids. "What can we do to make biology more stimulating, more creative? What can we do to make it more fun?" It didn't take long for me to realize that students really do know a lot about how they can best be taught.

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> First of all, they liked being able to express themselves in class and do things their way. They wanted time to think. They didn't want me just shoving stuff down them—you know, quick, quick, quick, "You have 15 minutes." They want less test, less fill-in-the-blanks stuff, fewer handouts, more projects, more student-designed things, more role in decision making. They wanted more interesting problems. They wanted fewer problems. They wanted their problems. They were sick and tired of cookbook labs. So I took all of their ideas and thought about it awhile, and it wasn't all easy to take. But I was sick of most of that stuff too, so we embarked on real research in which they were given something to observe and inquire about. They designed their own labs; basically, designed them their own way, using the materials at hand. I just stopped dispensing information. It's more like an inquiry now. The students are the learners, and they are also the providers of their own learning. I'm the one who steers, but they have a big say-so in the route we take.

Identifying the Important Knowledge

Barbara Elmore has done more than cosmetic surgery in her classroom. She has changed more than assignments and tests. She has altered the balance of power and reshaped the definition of knowledge and knowing. To begin a comprehensive restructuring of your own class as Barbara has done will take some courage. I suggest that you begin by looking at your content and how you teach it. Ask your students what they think, as Barbara did. Is your attitude toward your content frustrating students? Are you teaching your content as stuff you know and they do not? Are you defining knowledge as facts in books or lectures or, worse yet, stuff on tests? That view of knowledge is the norm in many classrooms, and it's a kind of hangover from the nineteenth century when people believed that the essential mysteries of the universe had been encountered and solved by smart people. It's a view of knowledge as a containerized commodity locked in libraries and books that locks up the act of teaching, too. It leads teachers to do what Carl Rogers has called, "the exposition of conclusions."[1]

If you are presenting the central tenets of your content as issues already settled, as truth already known and uncontested, then your students aren't going to be inclined to interact with that content and raise questions of their own. They are going to feel locked away from content. "Knowledge must solve a problem or provoke inquiry for it to seem important," says Grant Wiggins.[2] Expository teaching has too often characterized major subject areas like science and social studies and English. Schooling has far too often been a kind of warehouse operation in which teachers load trivial knowledge into students—a teamster's kind of work. The term paper, the science report, the essay have often been mere copying exercises from other sources. If you are going to develop your students as thinkers, you must begin to look at knowledge and knowing in new ways.

How else can you view knowledge? What other ways can you teach domain-specific knowledge to students? What does it mean to *know* something? One important ingredient to stir into this stew of thinking about reform and change is that the knowledge that thinkers can use is socially constructed. Personal knowledge is made powerful and permanent as it interacts with that of other knowledge makers. Meanings are negotiated and sharpened by learners as they talk and write about them in social contexts. There is not an efficient way to shortcut or truncate the process of knowledge making. If students are to become authentic knowledge makers and acquire what Grant Wiggins has called "the habits of thoughtful inquiry,"[3] you will have to provide lots of time for them to talk—time to talk to you and to each other and to themselves. These inquiry-based conversations will place a continuing emphasis on the importance of the class-

> *This new view of knowledge does not mean you have nothing to teach students or that textbooks are no longer important or that old knowledge is no longer valuable.*
>
> DAN KIRBY

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[1] Donald Schon. *Educating the Reflective Practitioner: Toward a New Design of Teaching and Learning in the Professions.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1987.

[2] Grant Wiggins, "The Futility of Trying to Teach Everything of Importance," *Educational Leadership* (November, 1989).

[3] Wiggins, 1989.

room as community, a community where more speculative talk is encouraged—an environment where thinking aloud talk and hypothetical talk and knowledge-building talk are ongoing. And more writing will be necessary—not more writing from encyclopedias and report writing but reflective, theory-building writing, student-owned writing like that done for logs and journals that feed thinking.

Building a Community of Learners

Grace Beam, a seventh grade life science teacher at Pershing Middle School in the Houston Independent School District, began her classes by bringing her students into a circle and placing a live hermit crab on the floor of the classroom and letting it crawl around. As her students oohed and aahed and sometimes screamed, she began to capitalize on their natural curiosity. She asked them what questions they had. And the talk began to focus on science. As they asked questions, she extended those questions and asked some of her own. Students jumped in to add personal knowledge and raise other questions. Within ten minutes or so, Grace and the crab had created an intense climate for inquiry and learning without telling the students anything. Finally, she said, "Class, this is how we're going to learn science this year. We're going to observe things and wonder about things and find answers and new questions. We're going to learn life science by thinking and acting like scientists."

Grace Beam began her year by signaling to her students that their questions were important, that they were responsible for their own learning, and that they were going to function as a community of thinking scientists. Classrooms as communities is the key to that kind of learning. Communities offer modeling and support for individual thinkers to extend the thinking of others while offering opportunities for mutual criticism and self-correction. Communities build dispositions to think.

Treating the Classroom as a Studio

Something that has helped me restructure my class, think in new ways about what I'm doing, and facilitate the creation of the same kind of community of learners that Grace Beam is striving for is to treat the classroom as a studio. What comes to mind when you hear the word *studio*? Freedom, independent work, creativity, process, space, light, productivity? Those are all things I wanted in my classroom. I wanted to work toward building what Lauren Resnick and others are calling "cognitive apprenticeships."[4] I wanted to build a work environment where students learn thinking as a trade. A studio is a place where learners work in front of each other and where the studio master is both mentor and artist. I adopted the metaphor of classroom as studio to see how that might open my mind to new roles for me to play and to help me place more of the responsibility for learning on individual students.

My classroom does not look much like a real studio; it has desks in rows and far too many bodies to feel spacious. It's not interior decorating that I'm after, but the values and principles of a studio classroom. It's the psychological environment that is critical. In the studio, repeated practice and experimentation are the norm. Students do not expect to get it right the first time; getting it right may not be a primary value at all. Individual visions and versions are what is important. And thinkers come to those versions by experimenting, by trying out ideas. The teacher's role in the studio is to stay out of the student's way, but not too far out of the way. Studio teachers are highly selective with their instruction. They often respond to students' questions like, "What do you want?" with "I want to see your view of this" and to, "Does this look right?" with comments like "What do you think?"

Studio teachers often work in front of their students and share their own processes and quandaries. When studio teachers do give specific coaching suggestions, they try to give them while the students are at work. They abandon speeches to the whole class like the "Before you do this . . ." speech and the rules and guidelines speeches. They try to build a comprehensive frame for learning, giving students a sense of how they are going to proceed; then they set the whole thing in motion and go to work. I do some of my best teaching over the shoulder as I listen to individual students represent their questions and problems. I encourage students who need more help and support to find it from within the classroom community by consulting with partners and group members. "See what your partner thinks about that" is my typical response to a student in need of direction.

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[4] Lauren Resnick, *ASCD Update* (February, 1990).

Setting Up a Studio Classroom

Initiating an environment where students are encouraged to solve real problems and develop individual visions and versions, using their own strategies, substantially complicates the teacher's ability to know where each student is and what he or she is doing. In the studio classroom, you will need a plan for monitoring your students' progress and problems. Since you are going to give students lots of time to work independently in class and work in groups and work with partners, you want to be sure that they are using that time well. Giving students three or four weeks to complete a project and then finding out that half of them have not done very much is not acceptable. You need to monitor their work with regular reports. Three strategies that will help you know how well each student is doing, even if you have 95 students in three classes, are (1) a thinker's log; (2) a portfolio; and (3) a working plan.

A Thinker's Log. I have found it helpful to ask students to keep a log or journal as they work. Sometimes I assign specific log entries like, "Read this article and talk back to it in your log." Sometimes I just ask students to give me a free form response to something they did or talked about in class. I don't collect the logs very often, maybe sample pages each week, and I don't try to structure the recording very much. I want the logs to be the students' own collections of responses to readings and classroom experiences. But I learn how they are doing by sampling the logs, and I keep students on track by responding with encouraging comments.

A Portfolio. Students need a place to work and keep that work together, and I have found a portfolio to be an invaluable tool in the studio classroom. Portfolios, which are somewhat in vogue now as tools for evaluation, may contain samples of the students' best work, which are submitted for grading or assessment. The kind of portfolio I'm using is quite different, however, from many of those being used. This portfolio is the place where students keep *all* of their work: trials, experiments, drafts, sketches, experimental notes, observations, and musings. I tell my students that their portfolios are the tracks of their work, the visible evidence of their mind at work. And when I grade their performance, I give the portfolio equal weight with their finished products, whatever those are. The portfolio is the record of process, and I view it as every bit as important as the completed products.

A Working Plan. At the very beginning of the class, try to have students develop a working plan on how they think they will proceed. This plan will vary, depending on what kind of work the students are going to do. The plan can be a map, a series of drawings, a list of steps, a time line, a list of concerns or obstacles, even a log entry on how they feel about the project before they launch into it. The plan is not a straitjacket, a rigid outline, or a pressure-packed set of deadlines. It's a way of getting them to think about where they are going, even before they know what they are doing. And it gives you a lot of information about what kind of problem solvers they are and how their minds are already working. As students proceed through the experiences that you have developed for them or with them or that they have developed for themselves, have them revise and alter their plans. As the plans unfold, discuss them with the whole class and with individuals.

Auditing the Work in Process

Devising some procedure for getting a progress report from each student each week is almost essential. I have been using something I call *audits*. My students prefer to give me these reports on Mondays. They know when they come to class that I'm going to ask them to document how the work is going. Since I teach writing, my audits have to do with how the students' writing is progressing; but your audits could focus on any specific task that students are to complete. Here are some sample questions from my weekly audits:

- What's in stock? How many pieces do you have in the portfolio, and in what shape are they?

- What's on back order? What is still in your head? What pieces are you thinking about and planning to write?
- Which pieces are working? Do you have any really solid pieces that may grow into longer ones? Do you have any pieces worth elaborating on?
- How are your work habits? How much time are you spending on your writing? Are you jotting notes and ideas? Working at the computer? Reading?
- What problems are you having? Is there anything I can do to help?

The following response is typical; it is from Ruthie Escalante, a student in my class when I was a visiting professor at the University of California, Santa Barbara:

> Dan,
>
> I now have five pieces in my writer's portfolio: the first being our first write starting with "My family is . . ." and it's in okay shape. It's rough, I did it in a hurry. It'll do, but I could fix it if you want me to. Then I have the summary of my "Life Parts," and that may as well be in Greek because only I could understand it. I thought we were just going to discuss it and not read it. My third piece is the first of a trilogy of memories; I am quite proud of it, in fact. I spent much time and thought on the piece and, although none of my group liked it, I still can't wait for your feedback. It's my best piece. The second part (4th piece) is written out and not bad, but I'd like to develop it more. The final work I have in my possession is that which I wrote last night; it is weak and I'm getting discouraged. To get something pulled together for next Thursday, I must really concentrate on my love of writing and the important, positive first impression I want to make. I will probably compile the three pieces for a large synopsis (I'll have to play around with them), I have to purchase some typewriter ribbon, and you can count on a finished project I will be proud of.
>
> Have a good weekend.
>
> Ruthie

Ruthie's audit, like most of my other students' audits, is honest and informative. I learn that she has five pieces in the portfolio, and she gives me a status report on each. I learn that she is still trying to please me, even though I've been emphasizing the importance of pleasing one's self: "I can fix it if you want me to," and "I still can't wait for your feedback." But she closes with the line "a finished project I will be proud of," a hint that she really is beginning to see the work as her own. She also gives an updated plan for pulling the writings together by the deadline. As a teacher, I feel as if I know exactly where Ruthie is and how her work is going, and I have the feeling that Ruthie knows that, too.

Valuing Metacognitive Thinking

The most helpful and valuable metacognitive information I'm getting from students is coming from the reflections they write when the inquiry has drawn to a close and the final products and portfolios are ready for evaluation. This powerful information about how things went and how I can revise and change what I did is something most of us have been missing for all our teaching lives. Oh, I've asked students to evaluate a unit or even complete a self-evaluation, but those documents were almost always perfunctory and useless. Students either told me what I wanted to hear or didn't have much to say at all. It wasn't until I began the studio classroom approach that I realized my own mistake. If students do only the teacher's assignments to the teacher's specifications, there really isn't much they can say about their processes: "I did what you wanted; here it is." But if students have freedom to make individual decisions about how to proceed, they have important things to tell us about how it went. If students have to find their own ways through a problem, devise and think through alternatives, and consult with other class members, they can be quite articulate about the circuitous route that inquiry took.

I have been amazed at how seriously and thoughtfully students approach these reflection times. For the first time in my teaching, I know what students think they are doing, as well as what they have been doing, as shown in this example from Mark Mester, a student of mine at the University of Georgia:

> Dr. Dan,
>
> I am taking this time to respond about a few things I have had on my mind. The first item I would like to talk about is the nature piece. I have been wondering why I do not have the motivation I did for the

> memoir piece. Part of the reason must be the winding down of the quarter. But I think there is more. I love being out in nature. I especially love going camping in the mountains with my friends, or going fishing (saltwater) in Florida. In both instances, I feel a sense of awe, and a sense of smallness?? It is a great feeling. I am not sure if I always feel a part of nature. Sometimes I feel like I belong, and at other times I feel I am an outsider. I do not know if I can find universal truths in nature; I guess I have tried such things in this class. But it is difficult to go out, observe nature, and rattle off truth. It is difficult to always compare nature to my life. Perhaps I didn't always have to do this, maybe I'm looking and writing the wrong way. In any case, the writing is unnatural. It is too forced, thus it lacks emotion, fire. I think it is dull. Still, explorations benefitted me.
>
> First of all, even though my writing was scarce and poor, I believe my powers of observation improved. Often, I would be driving somewhere and I would just stop and think of how I would describe that field, or that sunset, and why. Why do I want to write about the sunset? I know that this is where my nature piece should start. An enforced observation is the beginning. (I suppose I do have a basic understanding of what I'm supposed to be doing, but still it isn't easy.) The second benefit is the crafting of the language. I enjoyed experimenting with the form, and I liked my Shakespeare piece because of this reason. It was fun to try new things. Sometime, I really want to write a great nature piece like Annie Dillard, but first I really need to get motivated; I need to feel that the piece is important, relevant, and natural. I'm hoping I'm developing this sense.

Mark's reflection comes after a class inquiry centered on observing and writing about nature. Obviously, Mark is not satisfied with his writings, but he has come to learn some things about himself as an observer, thinker, and writer. If I didn't collect this information, I might look at Mark's work and think he just wasn't interested or didn't work hard enough. I may think the observation of nature itself was the problem. I may blame myself or the readings or the explorations he chose. Worse, I may jump to all the wrong conclusions about Mark as a thinker if I grade only Mark's work. But in this reflection, I learned that Mark really had wrestled with important ideas about observing nature. Mark has a strong sense of what worked and didn't work for him in his writings and in this inquiry. He gave me some specific clues as to what he might do next time: play with the outsider/insider dichotomy, continue to emphasize observation activities, encourage experimentation with form.

But Mark is only one student in the class. I need to know what triggers thinking for each student in my class. I need to know which explorations worked for which kinds of thinkers and whether my coaching and handouts were helpful. I need to know how well groups and collaborative time functioned. I need to know the effectiveness of my own attempts to mentor thinking. I must ask myself "What triggers my own thinking?" I need to compare my notes and observations and feelings with those of my students. When I collect and study the portfolios and audits and reflections from everyone in the class, I get a powerful composite picture of thinking and learning, information rich with potential to inform and improve my teaching.

The key to getting metacognitive information flowing in your classes is to emphasize and value that kind of thinking from the very beginning. Give students frequent opportunities and invitations to talk about how their minds work and how they went about solving problems or finding answers or creating artifacts before, during, and after the process. Value speculative, tentative talk; encourage risk-taking and hypothetical solutions. Engage in this kind of thinking yourself and in front of your students. And remember, students will make authentic observations of their mind at work only when they engage in real tasks and make independent decisions about how to pursue those tasks.

Restructuring Your Classroom: Getting Started

You want to begin the business of growing thinkers; you are going to find ways to bring these commitments alive in your classroom. You're not going to be pushed around by the curriculum or by habit. Great. You're resolved and enthusiastic, but how do you go about getting all this in place in your classes? Where do you go from here? How do you keep your edge, your mental sharpness, and your resolve to grow and change? And how do you go about enlisting colleagues and students in this process? Here is a suggestion. Don't try to change everything you've been doing overnight, but do more than just tinker with assignments. Start by reworking a unit that has never worked very well, or begin experimenting with concepts that have always been difficult for your students to grasp. Transforming my classroom into a studio was an experiment that worked for me and for my students. I encourage you to transform your class in ways that work for you. What's important is to work more toward the edges of your competence so that your students can work more toward the edges of theirs.

Teaching in a rich context that allows students maximum amounts of time to plan and work cooperatively and revise and redo their work and reflect on their processes will take a great deal of class time. You will not be able to assign as many stories to read or problems to work or reports to write as you have in the past. In fact, you may very well cover less ground than when you had a well-oiled, teacher-centered class. But look at what your students *are* doing. Look at the quality of their work, at the amount of pride and effort they have for their products, at the sense of community they have developed. You may often feel uncertain about how you've organized the learning environment, but experience will make you progressively better at planning and managing this more complex, more dynamic and whole classroom. Above all, believe in what you are doing. As Robert Sternberg says, "What a good school provides is good role models. That is the main thing we can give to the next generation."[5] Reforming classrooms and restructuring schools begins with teachers renewing their own minds. I wish you well as you begin this renewal process in your own thinking about teaching and learning. In spite of occasional setbacks and frustrations and the fact that I still have an enormous tangle of student papers to respond to and keep track of, the time I have spent rethinking and revising my classroom has made my teaching more exciting and productive than it has ever been before.

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[5] Michel F. Schaughnessy, "An Interview with Robert J. Sternberg," *Human Intelligence* newsletter (spring/summer, 1986), n.p.

Practical Ideas for Teaching Critical Thinking and Writing

Adapting Dan Kirby's Portfolio to the Study of a Novel

By Esther Severy
Assistant Vice Principal, McFadden Intermediate School,
Santa Ana Unified School District;
and Teacher/Consultant, UCI Writing Project

All of a sudden, that Aha! of recognition hit me as I listened to Dan Kirby speak at the UCI Writing Project Conference in December, 1989. I had been hearing bits and pieces about portfolios—rumors, almost whispers. I had also been wondering how these portfolios might be different from my in-class writing folders, collections of student writing, and culmination anthologies. Kirby, in his easygoing style, told us how he used portfolios as an approach to memoir writing with his college students. His approach seemed to be a refinement and an extension of my use of writing folders at the middle school. Ah, the Aha!

After hearing Dan Kirby's talk, I applied his portfolio approach to the study of the novel *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry* by Mildred D. Taylor. Set in the Deep South during the depression, this award-winning book is about social awareness, friendships, family, pride, and prejudice. The main character, Cassie Logan, a young black girl, and her family use their pride of family and pride of ownership to deal with prejudice and threats to their very existence. Because the book focuses on experiences as Cassie sees them, I thought it would serve as a perfect springboard for my students to use in recollecting their own experiences. By relating Cassie's experiences to similar ones in their past, they could make this novel their very own. My goal in using the portfolio approach was to encourage my students to generate several thoughtful pieces of writing which they could later reread and selectively weave into their own memoirs.

There are several components in Dan Kirby's portfolio approach to writing a memoir: journals (J), quickwrites (QW), audits (A), and drafts (D). Figure 1 demonstrates how he organizes the portfolio process.

I knew that if this approach were to succeed in a middle school class, each student would have to have his or her own folder, kept permanently in the classroom. Into this folder would go all writing connected with the novel: journal entries, Quickwrites, drafts, doodles, whatever we worked on that was in any way connected with the novel. I had students write weekly progress reports about the work they had done so far, indicating which assignments were difficult, easy, beneficial, insightful, disturbing, and so forth. Students attached all work relating to the novel to this self-evaluation and turned it in as a progress check.

I adapted Dan Kirby's components in the following manner:

Journal. As the students read the novel, they made regular journal entries. These entries were based on reactions to the text: an emotion evoked, a feeling stirred, a memory recollected, a question raised. There was no limit to the number of journal entries students might make, but they had to make some. More important than the number of responses was their quality: They had to demonstrate reflection, application, and synthesis rather than merely summary. Although summary was allowed along with these other levels of thinking, the point of this exercise was to encourage the students to think at a deeper level about what they were reading.

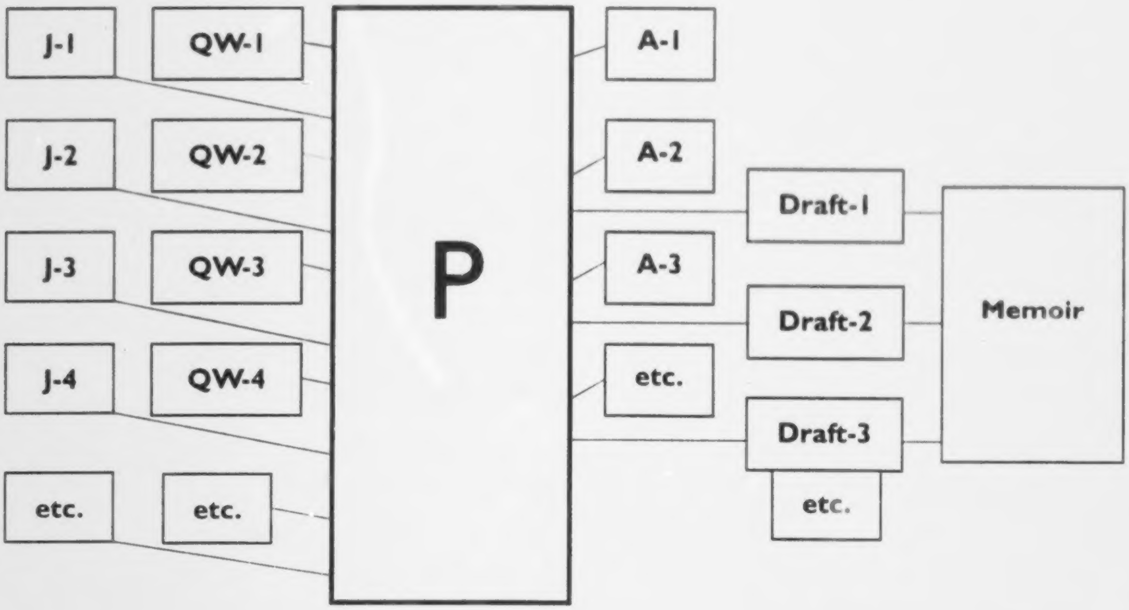


Fig. 1. Components in a Portfolio

Quickwrites. Throughout the teaching of this novel, I had the students do quickwrites that were based on some event in the novel but that reminded them of something similar that had happened to them. I might use selected study questions as subjects for quickwrites, but answering questions about the reading was not the purpose of the quickwrite. Instead, my purpose was to stimulate the students to think about a concept or a theme and apply it to their lives—to make them think about how this novel could affect them, not to test whether they had read the material.

Audit. Students wrote weekly audits, evaluating what they had accomplished. To do this, they culled their portfolios, looking for those things they wanted to share with me. They might write a summary of the week's activities. They might want to focus on one particular item and tell me about it, asking questions, reflecting on what they learned. This weekly audit gave students a chance to summarize what they had learned that week, to reflect on this learning, and to comment on it. It gave me a running account of each student's progress through the novel and an idea of what needed to be emphasized or explained, where the lesson might be bogging down, and who needed more help or wasn't doing the work.

Draft. The drafts were the students' working papers, reflections of their efforts to finalize the study of the novel. The drafts for this project came when I gave the final prompt at the end of the study of *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry*. All drafts were given credit but not graded. All drafts went into the portfolio.

To prepare my students to read *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry,* I first assigned as a prereading activity a newspaper article, written in 1968, titled "A Southern Idyll." It was the account of a town, inhabited primarily by African Americans, that had gained access to running water for the very first time. My students wrote a journal entry before discussing their responses in groups and then as a class. One of my students wrote the following:

> January 10, 1990
>
> **"Southern Idyll," 1968**
>
> I know they used to call Black people Negroes, but that word . . . or label . . . just hit me the wrong way! I mean, if someone called me a Negro, I'd think they were talking down to me. You know, like if someone went calling me Whitey all the time. Why can't they just call them people, like we all are???? The whole article seemed to be doing that too. I mean, they just got water . . . running water??!!! I wonder how it must have felt to know that you had to haul up your water everyday from somewhere else? It must have been hard. And to think that all the little five year old girl could think of was a bath! I wish my little brother would think like that sometimes!
>
> Addition: Some of the other kids thought it was great that the town just got running water. I still think they should have had it a long time ago. I found out that Jimtown, the name, might be a way people put down the Blacks then, too. Jim was a common name for anyone who was Black in those days. Wouldn't it be awful if someone saw that my skin was white and called me Mary, not caring what my real name was? Ugh!!!

This prereading activity, along with any notes garnered during the class discussion, went into the portfolio. As the students began to read Mildred Taylor's novel, they wrote more journal entries, which, as I mentioned previously, included emotional reactions and memories evoked by the novel and questions it raised. One student wrote the following in her journal:

> January 10, 1990
>
> **Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry**
>
> Chapter 1
>
> Wow! On this very first page, page 1, I already know so much about Little Man. That's a crazy name for a kid. But, I know that he's always neat and clean. I like the way she shows it: "shiny black shoes" and "lifting each foot high before setting it gently down again." We've done some of this showing in class and now I see how it really works in books, too. I think I'll look for some more of that.
>
> Another one . . . on page 3: "I dragged my feet in the dust, allowing it to sift back onto my socks and

> shoes like gritty red snow." I like the picture of red snow. It's weird but neat.
>
> How awful again. They get used, and I mean USED books that have been thrown away by the white kids. Then, all the way down the front part of the book it has kids' names and White, but when the black school gets it, it says nigra. First of all, why does White have to be capitalized and nigra not? And second, why do they call them nigra? I think it's disgusting. I think that if I were Little Man, I'd have done the same thing. I mean, after all, all he wanted was a nicer book. I know what it's like to get an OLD book with writing all over it and stuff. It's gross. I'm glad we all have brand new books this year.

As the journal entries were being shared in the groups, students were encouraged to add to their own journals anything they heard that seemed of particular significance to them. These journal entries went into their portfolios.

In addition to the journal entries, I assigned quickwrites about each chapter, asking students to relate an event from the novel to their own lives. For example, I gave the students a choice of responding to one of the following prompts based on Chapter 1:

1. Little Man is upset about being given a discarded book that not only is old but is now assigned to the "nigra." Think about a time that you had to accept someone's discarded object. Maybe it was an old school book, maybe an old hand-me-down coat or jacket, or maybe an old used bicycle . . . anything that was given to you as a discarded item and not given out of love. Think about how you felt and what you thought at the time. Describe the situation, the object, and your feelings.
2. Miss Crocker seems to be a very strict, unbending teacher. Think back about all the teachers you have had so far. Has there ever been a teacher you didn't like because he or she seemed unfair, unbending, or uncaring? Tell about at least one incident you had with this teacher, a time when he or she seemed very unfair or uncaring to the whole class or just to you. Use dialogue and describe the situation that shows this teacher's nature. (Please use a fictitious name for the teacher to keep the teacher's identity confidential.)

My purpose in assigning these quickwrites was to stimulate the students to think about a concept or theme, to encourage them to apply it to their lives, and to make them think about how this novel could affect them. Students' responses, which they wrote before, during, or after each chapter of the novel, went into the portfolios and were part of their weekly evaluations.

Dan Kirby calls the self-evaluations *audits* because that is exactly what they are. They are progress reports, statements of accomplishment and understanding, questions, and summaries of the week's activities. Preparing this audit, or self-evaluation, gave each student a chance to focus on what he or she had accomplished or learned, to reflect on all of the activities, and to comment on them. At the same time, reading these status reports helped me determine what students thought and felt about the novel. A sample student audit follows:

> January 17, 1990
>
> Dear Mrs. S.,
>
> This week I planned to do a lot with *Roll of Thunder* . . . I wanted to get the two quickwrites done, but only did one because I was sick on Tuesday. I really got a lot out of the group work, though, and think I at least know what you did when I was sick.
>
> I'm not sure about T. J., though, and why he's friends with the Logans. If he were here at our school I think he'd be a gang banger like "you-know-who." Maybe on one of my quickwrites I could write about the gangs here? I mean, they're part of life in Santa Ana even if we don't want 'em to be. You know? Besides, I can remember just last 4th of July and all the guns going off and stuff. In a way, I understand T. J. and why he wants a gun and just to protect himself. You know? Anyway—if I can I'd like to. Okay?
>
> This week could have been better. I don't like doing the journal right now cuz there's too much writing. But, I'll do it. I'll do better, too. Really.

Because my students wanted to be rewarded with grades for the quality of their efforts, I assigned the audits a letter grade. It was roughly equivalent to a spelling test grade in my book.

So far, I had used Dan Kirby's journals, quickwrites, and audits. Now, to the drafts. By the time we finished the novel, with richer discussions and more enthusiasm than any previous study of a novel had generated, the students had a wealth of information in their portfolios: their journal entries, plus added notes from class sharings of those journals; several autobiographical quickwrites that focused on their experiences with cultural awareness, prejudice, friendships, family, and pride; and several self-evaluations. I gave them the following prompt:

> You have just finished the novel *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry* and have several journal and quickwrite entries in your portfolio. You have thought about symbols and how they portray meaning in one's life. You have been asked by an editor of a popular magazine to write a memoir for the magazine, to be published in June and distributed to your classmates. Write a memoir in which you link at least three events from your life together with a symbol. This memoir will reflect your values as it tells the magazine's readers, your classmates, more about you. Enhance your memoir with descriptive detail; use dialogue to show, not tell; and follow the conventions of written English.

As a precomposing activity, we discussed how symbols often hold separate events together in a memoir. I then asked the students to form groups of four or five and to brainstorm the kind of symbols Mildred Taylor uses in *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry* and what those symbols stand for. We combined each group's responses into clusters like those shown in Figure 2. Then, I asked the same groups to brainstorm some of the symbols we use today to reflect our values or emotions. The class came up with clusters like the ones shown in Figure 3.

After the group brainstorming and clustering, the students searched their portfolios, looking for three incidents that could be connected with a symbol. At this point, they had to keep their ideas of symbol fairly open. Some of them chose their three favorite pieces in the portfolio and then tried to fit a symbol to those pieces. Others chose a symbol and looked for those pieces that they might be able to fit under its heading. Some of the symbols were real, like a father's eyes that connected three memories in which the inner child in the father contributed to the child in his children. Another was a medal, an award that symbolized achievement in three different areas and at three different times for a student. Some of the students had to invent a symbol: an object that kept cropping up in their writing, but not all the time, or some imaginary object that seemed to float through their pieces but that they never really had. For example, one student realized that sunshine

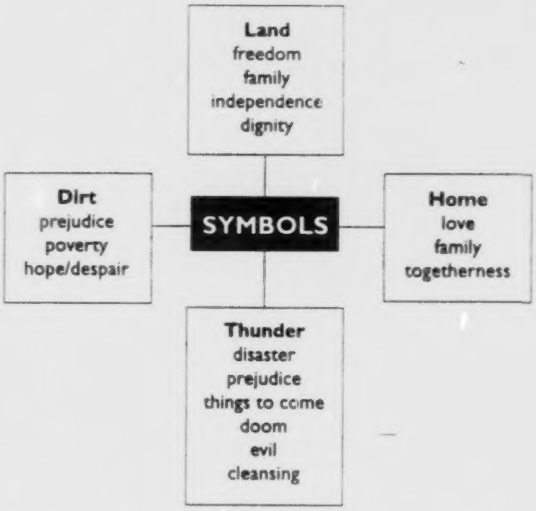

Land
freedom
family
independence
dignity
Dirt
prejudice
poverty
hope/despair
SYMBOLS
Home
love
family
togetherness
Thunder
disaster
prejudice
things to come
doom
evil
cleansing

Fig. 2. Clustering of Symbols from *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry*

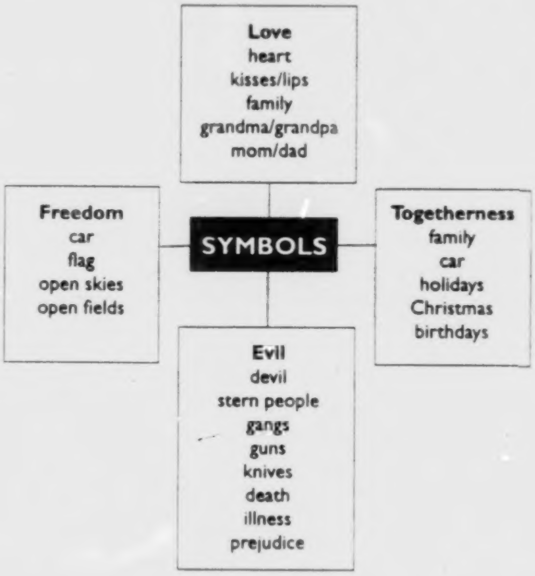

Love
heart
kisses/lips
family
grandma/grandpa
mom/dad
Freedom
car
flag
open skies
open fields
SYMBOLS
Togetherness
family
car
holidays
Christmas
birthdays
Evil
devil
stern people
gangs
guns
knives
death
illness
prejudice

Fig. 3. Clustering of Symbols from Students

seemed to play a big role in each of the three pieces he had chosen.

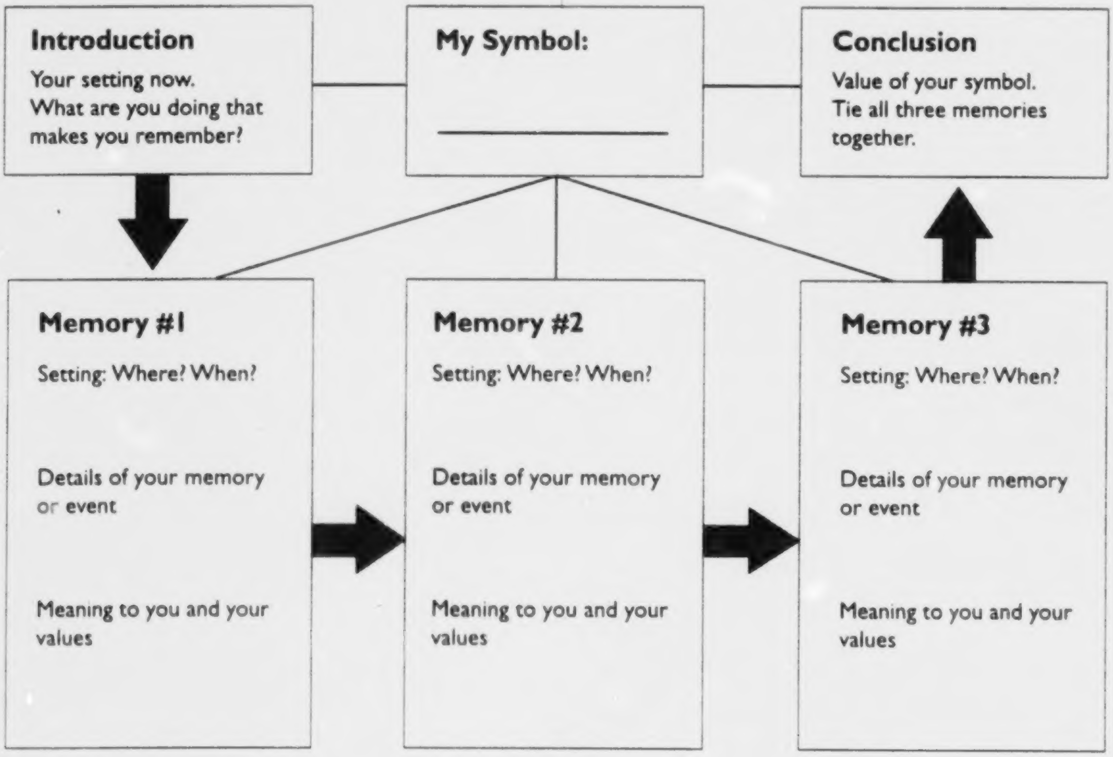
After identifying a symbol, each student drew a picture of it and wrote notes, radiating from that drawing, about each of the three parts of his or her memoir to show how each incident could be woven around the symbol.

Finally, before they drafted their memoirs, I gave students charts to help them organize their quickwrites, any journal entries that might be applicable, and their symbols. This chart, I hoped, not only would help them organize their multitude of writings and thoughts but also would guide them in the drafting of their memoirs. The chart appears below.

By the end of the study of *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry,* the students "owned" the novel: The hardships, triumphs, and pride of the Logan family had personal meaning for them. They also had a deeper understanding of themselves and how they relate to a world in which all races have the right to pride, a sense of family, friendships, and ownership. In addition, the students had had many opportunities to freely write their thoughts, reflections, ideas, and questions; had generated many kernels of ideas for future writings; and had earned many credits in the grade book.

I think that you will find the portfolio approach beneficial to your students in their study of a novel and that they will think more deeply, generate richer ideas, and produce better writing than they would have if the novel been taught in other ways. As you experiment with the portfolio approach, you will also benefit and be pleased as you watch your students' progress in their abilities to read, think, and write. This was certainly the case with my class.

Aha! and thank you, Dan Kirby!


Introduction
Your setting now.
What are you doing that makes you remember?
My Symbol:
Conclusion
Value of your symbol.
Tie all three memories together.
Memory #1
Setting: Where? When?
Details of your memory or event
Meaning to you and your values
Memory #2
Setting: Where? When?
Details of your memory or event
Meaning to you and your values
Memory #3
Setting: Where? When?
Details of your memory or event
Meaning to you and your values

Weaving an Autobiographical Web from Kirby's "Spider Pieces"

By Julie Simpson
English Teacher, Sunny Hills High School,
Fullerton Joint Union High School District;
and Teacher/Consultant, UCI Writing Project

Several years ago I attended one of Dan Kirby's workshops called "Images of Childhood." He showed us some of the techniques he was using to help his students tap into their memories and make meaning by re-creating their pasts. He used what he called "spider pieces"—bits of memories, sketches, snapshots, maps, "boundaries," views of friends, neighbors, parents—that in some magical way eventually wove together into a final memoir.

I was inspired. I loved what Dan was doing with autobiographical writing, and I wanted to do it, too. I wanted my students to read more autobiographical literature and more literature centered on childhood. Having students read about childhood and write about themselves would be a great way to introduce my yearlong theme of the hero's quest. It would also help establish the attitude I wanted to foster in my students—that of seeing themselves as writers. So I added and added and added—more writing, more autobiographical literature, more group work. And the unit I planned to last two months took a whole semester, and still we didn't make it through all I had wanted to do. There were not enough hours in a day. My inspiration didn't lag, but it was frequently counterbalanced by my weariness and frustration at not being able to do everything.

I had not learned how to give over control. I was creating an environment in which my students could make their own meanings, but I didn't want them to do it without my being there all the time to share in it. Besides, if I let them go on their own too much, they would waste time, and the curriculum was much too full to allow for wasting time.

As the years pass, I realize that what I need perhaps is not to give up *control over* the class but to exchange it for *guidance of* the class. Every year I cut out more "stuff" to allow class time for my students to think and share and write. Every year I am able to remain longer on the sidelines rather than in the center of learning. But this change has not been easy for me. And it is certainly not easy for my students. They come to me convinced that, as a teacher, I have the answers—that, as Dan Kirby says, knowledge is a "containerized commodity." School knowledge is not personal for them; it is what they regurgitate to earn a grade.

So we take our time in building a community of learners, establishing credibility for each member of the class and learning to trust everyone's responses equally—other students', our own, and the teacher's. We start slowly, working in triads. We all begin with the same "telling" statement written on the chalkboard:

- "I was so scared."
- "My broken arm hurt."
- "Mr. Johnson's house was spooky."
- "George was the nerd in my fifth grade class."

Each team rewrites the statement, and we share the different kinds of images we can present in one "showing" sentence. Then we take another telling sentence and practice again. All sentences are accepted equally. We talk about the differences between responding and evaluating, and we practice using some nonjudgmental language:

- "This word makes me hear/smell/see (and so forth) the action."
- "I wonder why you chose this word to describe such and such."
- "What does this word mean?"
- "I get chills from this house you portray."

Because our goal is to learn about writing by seeing ourselves as writers, we begin with the attitude that whatever our classmates write is exactly what they wanted to say. Our job as readers is to understand what they say, to interpret what we think they mean, and to respond to how their writing affects us personally. And that is the same approach we take when looking at the literature we read.

As soon as we have experimented with the group's showing sentences, we take a look at some literature and practice responding to it. We use a technique I call *active reading*, a combination of an inquiry approach to literature and Peter Elbow's responding to writing, which he describes in the next section of this book. The literary selections are short, so we read each one at least two times. We point out words and phrases that strike us each time we read the piece, underlining them as we go. We ask questions—factual questions about things we do not understand and interpretive questions to help make meaning of the author's intentions. We summarize, choosing one word or phrase from the piece that we feel best encapsulates it. And we give personal responses, stating how the piece makes us feel. For each piece, we take three minutes to elaborate one of our responses. Because all of the literature we read in relation to the "Images of Childhood" unit is short, I can photocopy pieces so we can write on the copies and respond on the back of each piece itself. With the first two, we share our responses in class, listing and grouping all our questions, and coming to an understanding of the piece through the kinds of questions we ask.

Once we understand how to respond to literature that published writers have written, we begin our own writing and respond to it in the same fashion. Now that I've trained my students, it's time for me to stand back and become more of a guide than a controller. As we work through the various "spider pieces" of our own memories, I introduce the approach, allow time for planning and at least beginning the writing in class, and guide the feedback in class each day. Here is my plan for the unit, which includes seven "spider pieces" that, spun together, create an autobiographical web:

1. Mapping Memories

   In class, we brainstorm as many memories from our childhoods as we can, discussing possible ways to categorize them. Each student creates a map, according to his or her own pattern, of as many childhood memories as possible, leaving room to add more later.

2. Snapshots (pictures we have etched in our memories)

   As an introduction to the second spider piece as training and for active reading, we read two poems and a short story: "Drawing by Ronnie C., Grade One" by Ruth Lechlitner, "Crystal Moment" by Robert P. Tristram Coffin, and "A Game of Catch" by Richard Wilbur.

   From our maps, we remember a scene that is very clear; Dan Kirby calls it a "mind picture that has edges." We jot notes about each scene, brainstorming it from lots of angles: Who is there? Where is each person? What are they doing? What do their faces look like? What are people wearing? What are they saying? What was said, and what is the tone of the conversation? Where is the snapshot taking place? What does this place look like? What objects are in the picture? Where is each object? What time of day is it? What is the weather like? How do you feel as this snapshot is being taken? Then we sketch each scene, being sure to place each object and person carefully in the picture. And, finally, we present the snapshot in writing, showing it as precisely as we can. We do this with three memories.

   Here's an excerpt from one student's snapshot, Darlene Park's "Too Curious for Comfort":

   > One Saturday afternoon I was sitting in the family room on the long couch just sort of playing around with this and that, and my mom and dad were on the love seat couch deep in a conversation. And I, like any other nine-year-old kid, was bored to pieces just sitting there listening to my parents. So I began to look around me to find something interesting to keep me occupied for a while.
   >
   > I started bouncing on the couch, momentarily enjoying the squeaky springing noise, but pretty soon I received a short, disapproving frown from my mom that made me think perhaps she didn't like the squeaky springs as much as I did! Then I caught the eyes of the dog through the glass door and began a staring contest with him. But he gave in too easily and kept cheating by looking away! So, I disgustedly gave *that* up!
   >
   > As my eyes roamed the room once more, the corner of my eye caught on to a little bottle with an orange cap sitting on the coffee table right next to me. I picked it up and began to read the label.

I want, by understanding myself, to understand others.

KATHERINE MANSFIELD

> Hmmmm! Super Glue! I wonder what's so super about it?! (These were my first thoughts as I began to get a little more interested.)

3. Boundaries

To introduce the third spider piece we read a description of Huck and Jim on the river from *Huckleberry Finn* by Mark Twain; "Knoxville: Summer 1915" from the opening of James Agee's *A Death in the Family;* and "The Block and Beyond" by Alfred Kazin.

We discuss the physical limits of our worlds as children and draw a map for each general idea, including where we could and could not go. We create maps for a neighborhood, house, and special place. On the back of each map, we list and categorize as many details as we can to re-create those places; then we transfer the information to the maps where possible.

We talk about how a description of one of these places will compare to the snapshots we have been writing. Although some students may want to include a situation in their piece, the focus will perhaps be more on the physical description and mood than on the incident. We write two pieces on boundaries.

Here is an excerpt from Shin Hae Lee's boundary piece, "Haunted House":

> I got real restless after dinner. I had to do something, anything. I went outside to the front porch and watched the dark streaks of tangerine cover the sun, cradled on top of the mountains. It was real peachy.
>
> Soon, crickets in the bushes began to chirp in their perpetual way, telling one that it was getting late. I went down the stairs and strolled along the dirt street, stopping at the house next door. I stood there, waiting for my friends to come out. I had forgotten that they couldn't come out any more. It had been almost three weeks since they moved back to our homeland.
>
> Wwwwhhh. Chills tingled up and down my back as the wind blew the moist air in my face. I put my hands in my pocket and I stared at the darkness inside the house. I felt like knocking at the door. Were they really gone? Taking two brave steps forward, I stopped abruptly as a funny feeling came over me. I lost my nerve. What if someone does open the door and it's not my friends? What if it's a witch, or even a ghost?

4. Friends

To begin this spider piece, we read "I'm Shot" by Claude Brown and "Red" by Yevgeny Yevtushenko.

We choose one age of our childhood, say six or seven, and make clusters of all the friends we knew then. (See the "Prewriting" section for suggestions on clustering.) We include pets, family, relatives, acquaintances, good and bad influences, and so forth. Then we choose one of those people we have not seen in years and talk with him or her in a written monologue. In the process, of course, we include some fond memories, too.

Here's an excerpt from Sang Han's letter to his friend, Josh:

> Homerun hitting contests, Indian ball, football games. Those were some of the good times we had together. Throwing All-Star ballots through the fences at Wrigley Field. Remember the time when I hit a baseball and it hit your wrist, Josh? And how about the time you walloped the ball over the wall and onto the railroad tracks?
>
> How many times did we sneak into Dyche Stadium to play football in the snow? Orrington vs. Lincolnwood. I would dump my bike in the bushes and squeeze in through the fence and onto the playing field.
>
> As I reflect back to those times, I sometimes doubt if we'll ever see each other again. I know I said that I'll visit, but so far it hasn't happened and it has been two and a half years already since I moved from Chicago. I hate to think that we'll never see each other again, but that thought sometimes pops into my head.

5. What Kind of Kid Was I?

To introduce the fifth spider piece, we read "Charles" by Shirley Jackson and "Shame" by Dick Gregory and talk about how point of view controls the kind of information we get about a character. (Suggestions for teaching point of view in writing appear in an earlier section of this book.)

We choose someone who knew us as a child—a friend, a neighbor, a teacher, a baby-sitter, a parent—preferably someone who is still available. We talk about what that person would remember about us that we do not: cute expressions, mealtime behaviors, habits, fears, firsts, bedtime rituals, and so forth.

Then we interview that person. Before the interview, though, we practice role-playing. Since many students have no experience interviewing, we list questions that might get the conversation going and that would help the interviewer find out about his or her subject's life, background, interests, and ambitions. Each student goes to the interview with a list of questions that might be important to ask as an autobiographical researcher.

Finally, we write a "kid portrait" of ourselves based on information from the interview. That means we have to write about ourselves in the third person—from someone else's point of view—trying to include some direct quotes from the interview. Before writing, we talk in groups about how the piece might begin and about some possible openings: dialogue? scene setting? telling detail?

Here's an excerpt from Jason Greenspan's kid portrait, "My Little Angel, Jason," which he writes from the perspective of his father:

> The motor noisily sputtered as I shoved the lawn mower across the tall, wet grass. I dragged my feet as I trudged my weary body across the length of the lawn another time. Pace after pace, my mind drifted toward a time when I could relax in my air-conditioned living room and calmly read my Sunday *New York Times*.
>
> Noon was slowly creeping up on me, and the lawn seemed to be just as long as when I started. The hot July sun scorched the humid air as my thoughts grew further and further towards that front page and the cold glass of water that would be by my side as I read. I envisioned the cool air circulating around my modestly balding head, and my thoughts drifted further and further astray; but not Jason's. No, I knew that he was quite content pushing his bright yellow and orange mower five feet behind me.
>
> I could barely hear the innocent clicks of his plastic engine over the over-powering roar of the steel one that was pushing my mower, yet his cheery whistling pierced through the rumble of the engine and the notes danced around my earlobes like children around a mulberry bush. Suddenly, I was reflecting on Jason more than the paper. What a fine child he was! He was so helpful; he always lent his little hands whenever there were chores to be done. But he was just as happy standing by my side as I did my chores on a Sunday afternoon. Never did he test my wife and me. Instead, he accepted our lessons and then went on being his own happy-go-lucky self. I came to the conclusion that this was the way a child was supposed to be.
>
> While Jason's whistling nested in my eardrums, the mower coughed and sputtered, choked on a last piece of grass, and died in the middle of the lawn. Jason pulled his mower along side of mine, turned the big red key, gazed up at me with his deep brown eyes, and smiled from ear to ear.

6. Objects

To introduce the sixth spider piece of reflective writing, we read Pablo Neruda's childhood recollection of receiving a gift of a stuffed sheep through a fence hole, *All I Really Needed to Know I Learned in Kindergarten* by Robert Fulghum, and "Autographs" by Cindy DeFillippis.

Then we remember favorite childhood objects. For homework that night students search through closets and drawers and under beds to see what they still have that has endured through the years. If possible, they bring an old favored object to share with the class the next day. We use these objects to stimulate reflection, filling out a chart like this:

A. What the object is—what it looks like
B. What it meant to me new—how it looked, how I got it, what I did with it, how I felt about it
C. What it means to me now—what it symbolizes for me
D. What this symbol stands for in the outside world—how it goes beyond me and describes the way people are
E. What new insight I can gain about life through this object

Here is an excerpt from Marney Cheek's reflection on her beanbag dog, "Polly":

> Polly. As I admire your view of my room from atop my wall unit, your bulging brown eyes call to me and beckon my memory to journey back to the times we've shared.
>
> I know; now your brown beanbag ears sag from years of restless nights when I would crush you under my body in pretzel twists. But you were

patient with me, as my clammy palms squeezed your paws and fondled your ears.

Your orange fur, although thinning and faded in places, still radiates your warm disposition and relentless spirit which has always kept you and me finely woven as one. You're thinner now, but since I no longer need you to squeeze in order to live through nightmares and homesickness, I suppose it doesn't matter . . .

It's strange that I would look to you, a beanbag dog, for comfort. I guess I didn't see the line drawn between stuffed animals and people. I wanted to be needed. When I was little, I wanted the responsibility of mature friendship. I wanted to solve what I saw as life's problems.

Now I have real problems, and you aren't here to help solve them. Being a teenager isn't easy, you know. Sometimes I'm Sir Edmund Hillary, conquering Mt. Everest, while other times I'm the Challenger, headed for disaster. I've grown away from you the moment I probably need you the most.

Now I understand why some thirty-five-year-olds still have their favorite stuffed rabbit or teddy bear. To help them through the seemingly impossible times. Now I understand why I still keep you atop my wall unit, watching over me.

7. The Final Piece—The Web

Looking at everything we have written and drawn, we talk about how to sort through it and then weave it together into a final autobiography. Possibilities include taking one piece and making it longer, taking two or three pieces and unifying them into one whole piece, or writing a new piece we didn't have a chance to write earlier. We work with a partner first, sorting out what might work. Then we make a plan, share the plan with our writing groups for feedback, and create a draft to present to the writing group.

I ask students to print out each draft as they write it so that they can have a record of their progress. Between one draft and the next, they write about what satisfies them in the piece so far and where they are still having trouble. They prepare a couple of questions they want to ask their response groups. During the last meeting of this group, students share drafts rather than finished pieces; and before the students write their final drafts, I read their responses to the groups.

Here is sophomore Ngoc Truong's complete final piece, "Loss of Identity." Written in 1988, it is a projection of what she might say two years later, at age eighteen:

February 17, 1990

Dear Mom and Dad,

Well, I'm finally eighteen. My four years of high school really zoomed by. It's hard to believe that I'll be graduating in just a few months. I want you to know that I owe all my success to you.

By now, you're probably wondering why I'm writing this letter. It's simple. I've been ashamed of something I believed a long time ago. Why bring it up now? Well, I'm an adult today. I finally feel ready to tell somebody. I know, I've been waiting too long. But I guess now is better than never.

Ever since I was in the first grade, I felt ashamed and embarrassed of not being an American. It was hard to adjust to a new environment when everyone else was completely different from me. Having straight black hair and yellow skin made me different from others. It felt awkward living in a land whose colors are red, white, and blue, and constantly being reminded of coming from a land of red and yellow.

Being Vietnamese made it even more difficult. I hated history classes: watching the war movies; reading the names of the deceased soldiers; listening to the lifeless lectures; knowing that most of my relatives perished in this battle that seemed endless. It was too much for me to handle. Red eyed and sniffled nose, I would try to hide my sorrow, but it was useless. My remorse was too obvious.

Having an unusual name was the worst part of all. I dreaded the first day of school, listening to my name being mispronounced class after class. Mom, you always told me I have such a beautiful name. Why, then, couldn't anyone pronounce it correctly? The teachers got the goofiest pronunciations out of my name. "Gok, Nyo, Gnok." But I was always prepared. They would say something like, "Please correct me if I pronounce this name wrong." Or they'd say, "This is a wild guess," before they attempted to read my name off the attendance sheet. That was my cue to hide my face as I silently slunk down in my wooden chair. If I was lucky, my face wouldn't turn red, but that didn't happen too often.

We take our time in building a community of learners, establishing credibility for each member of the class and learning to trust everyone's responses equally.

JULIE SIMPSON

It didn't get any better after class. One kid after another would come up to me and tease me. It didn't matter whether I was playing in the sandbox, hanging upside down on the monkey bars, or just walking on the soggy field. Humiliation stuck to me like super glue. I didn't know how to shake it off. It seemed useless.

There was one boy in particular who always had a new name for me, "Knock on wood." Maybe a rhyme, "Knock, Knock. Who's there? Mickey Mouse's underwear." Or maybe just plain, "Knock! Knock!" I tried to ignore his crude remarks, but it wasn't easy. If I told him to shut up, he'd say, "Who's gonna make me?" Well, I couldn't make him. Sometimes I'd just cover my ears with my frail hands and walk away. Anywhere. He would follow me, of course, but sooner or later, he'd get tired of his usual teasing and would leave me alone. For a boy as small as he was, he sure had a big mouth!

Excitement filled the atmosphere when you announced that we were filing for American citizenship. This was my chance! You had to pass the test for my sake. Becoming an American citizen was the only thing on my mind since that day. Everything would be perfect. No more teasing and no more Vietnamese . . . everything. I mean, no more Vietnamese language, and, hopefully, no more Vietnamese food. Don't get me wrong, Mom. Your meals were absolutely delicious, but I was craving hot dogs and hamburgers. Perfect.

I imagined red, white, and blue colors flashing in my mind as the authorities declared us American citizens; but I was thinking too far ahead. We sure hit the history books, didn't we? Sliding in and out of the Fullerton Public Library, testing while eating dinner. It was tough, but we had to think of the rewards.

Shockingly, I was more relieved than proud when you passed the citizenship test. Those red, white, and blue colors didn't flash the way they were supposed to. What went wrong? It wasn't supposed to be like this. I looked forward to the next day of school. I stalked crowded halls with an American flag sticker, the one that the naturalization authorities gave us, on my sweater. I had shoulder length hair at the time so I was sure everyone could see my sticker. At the end of the day, I was deeply disappointed. Sure, I received a lot of congratulations, but what I really wanted was to put an end to the teasing. That didn't happen. It was just an ordinary day for me. The mocking still plagued me as usual.

Being an American citizen didn't change my life at all. Well, it did in a way. I felt secure knowing that I had so many rights that I never had before, but that was only an outer shell. Deep inside, I was still the same Vietnamese refugee. I ate the same food and spoke the few Vietnamese words I knew at home. The funny thing is that I didn't seem to mind. In fact, I didn't want anything to change.

Mom and Dad, you gave me many values that I can't erase. You taught me everything that makes me whole. It's like a jigsaw puzzle. If I lose one piece, I'm not complete. All of those Vietnamese customs you surrounded me with as a child grew up with me. I was still the same person then, and I'm the same person now.

Since I've matured with this thought in mind, I've learned to fight off the humiliation that once plagued me. Oh, I know I'll be facing this problem everywhere I go, but I have to go on. My values and customs are too important to waste. They are the substance that make me Vietnamese at heart.

I don't know how to express my emotions right now. Part of me is still ashamed, yet the other part of me is proud. Proud of being an American. Proud of being Vietnamese. Proud of having such wonderful parents who taught me my true values and customs. Truly proud.

Love always,
Ngoc

This whole unit as it now stands is planned to take seven and one-half weeks. That means I can finish it in the first quarter, allowing for extra time here and there and time out for interruptions. Basically, the first week and one-half is spent in creating groups and establishing the responsive environment. It takes about five weeks to go through the spider pieces. The final piece takes a week of class time. I reserve the computer laboratory for four of those days, and the students decide where they can best spend their time.

If all goes well when we put the whole thing together, we have nine spider pieces, three or four of which have been reworked for the writing group, and one final autobiography. Every now and then, a class becomes so involved in this project that the students want to publish. When that happens, each student selects one piece he or she wants to publish (from any of the ten). It goes to an editorial board that responds, edits, organizes, and compiles the book. There are always enough artists in a class to illustrate the material. Luckily, all of our work is on computers now, so future publications will be much easier to compile.

As Dan Kirby suggests, I have set up a plan for monitoring the work as it progresses. For this unit, each of our students is asked to have a loose-leaf notebook that can be divided into four sections: Literature and Lit Log; Stuff About My Stuff; My Stuff; and Final Web. I have a collection of stamps that I use to note that work is done on time. When the literature is assigned, stamps are given the next day for work that is completed. When pieces are due, stamps are given as they are collected to be shared in samples. When I read the final portfolio and evaluate it, papers with stamps earn ten points; those without earn seven.

The section of the notebook that I read the most carefully and ask for throughout the unit is the Stuff About My Stuff (SAMS) log, the metacognitive work. Because the class is working on its own and I am trying not to control, I need to know how things are going. So after each activity, I ask the class to write something in their SAMS logs:

- How do you feel about your last piece?
- How did your group respond?
- What do you think you will do for the next piece?
- How can you see your writing developing so far?
- What kind of piece have you most enjoyed?
- How was this piece different from the last one you wrote?
- Is there anything you want me to know about at the moment?

I read these logs once or twice a week and always include some kind of personal response to each student.

For the final portfolio, students select two of their spider pieces: their favorite and the one that posed the greatest challenge to create. They write an introduction to each piece, explaining how and why it fits the web. They also include all the drafts that reflect the steps they used to create their final web and, of course, the web itself. Each student decides how best to present his or her portfolio of childhood images.

I have found this autobiographical unit to be a favorite with my students. Whether we publish or not, they are proud of their work. They often want to take it home to share with their families. Parents enjoy the fact that their children are asking questions about their past and are voluntarily sharing memories. And finished autobiographies make wonderful family presents.

Critical Thinking: The Lure of Literature's Beyond

By Linette Thomas

English Teacher, Will Rogers Junior High School,
Long Beach Unified School District;
and Teacher/Consultant, California State University,
Long Beach, South Basin Writing Project

The language arts sirens sing "into, through, and beyond," enticing students with the lure of literature. As they follow the call, students must think critically in all three areas, but I especially emphasize the "beyond" stage. To me, taking my students beyond the literature means taking them into themselves. After they have read a piece of literature and discussed how the text operates at both the literal and symbolic levels, they are ready to internalize the literature by extending some idea from the work into their own lives.

In *The Consequences of Writing*, Robert Parker and Vera Goodkin refer to Piaget's belief that "understanding or knowing anything . . . occurs when we actually use that something to invent or make something else." When students work with the literature in a personal way, they use it as "the instrument for achieving another goal rather than the goal itself."[1]

As students critically handle the story in a new form, they begin to own the literature. They no longer view the piece as simply a combination of words on the page (no matter how meaningful). The literature now touches students where they live. The academic becomes personal.

One of my favorite "beyond" exercises follows a reading about Harriet Tubman's trips back into slave territories. Slaves who wanted to use the underground railroad to escape with Tubman had to know beyond a doubt that they really wanted to gamble on freedom because Tubman carried a gun to keep anyone from turning back.

As Dan Kirby states in the opening article of this section, "If you are presenting the central tenets of your content as issues already settled, as truth already known and uncontested, then your students aren't going to be inclined to interact with that content and raise questions of their own." With this concept in mind, I divided my seventh grade English class into cooperative learning groups. I asked them to imagine that they were slaves on a southern plantation. Each group had to decide whether or not it would join Tubman on her next trip. To help groups decide, one member of each home group met with a minijigsaw group to brainstorm all the reasons to go. Another group member met with others to formulate reasons to stay. The remaining group members set up the conditions in making the decision: Where was the plantation? In which year and in which season is the escape planned? How are slaves treated by their owner? Do the slaves have family members to consider?

After the brainstorming, group members met again and began arguing. I heard things like, "Hey, man, I gotta be free!" and "Yeah, but what about John? His wife is pregnant." I felt as if these seventh graders really were in the antebellum South making life-and-death decisions!

Heated debates behind, each group wrote its decision, giving at least three reasons for going or staying. The only restriction was that all members of the group had to go or they all had to stay; the group couldn't be split.

When we shared the decisions, all but two groups decided to risk the dangers of escape. The two groups that elected to stay believed that the conditions on their plantations weren't too bad. They chose not to leave the only home they'd ever known.

By thinking critically about their choices, the students moved beyond the study of the story. They used the information from the story to analyze, synthesize, and speculate as they answered the question of whether or not they would flee slavery. One group got into the assignment so thoroughly that its members asked to present their decision-making process as a play.

Imaginatively, my students peopled a time and place far away. Harriet Tubman's story came alive in their own lives. When the literature sirens called, my class followed, and the students found themselves on a nineteenth-century odyssey.

What the Text Says—What the Text Means to Me: Using the Dialectical Journal as a Tool for Critical Thinking

By Sheila Koff
Instructor of English, Orange Coast College;
and Teacher/Consultant, UCI Writing Project

Call it connection making, problem solving, question raising, or hypothesizing—critical thinking that shows active engagement with a text is what I want from my students. Each semester we go exploring—fellow learners—discovering, both individually and collaboratively, what the text means to us from what it says.

The dialectical journal, as described by Ann Berthoff, helps students independently explore literature—and, in turn, themselves—as they record their immediate responses to a text while they are in the reading process.[1] The dialectical journal encourages them to listen to and record their perceptions and, more important, to expand on and deepen their understandings.

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[1] Robert P. Parker and Vera Goodkin, *The Consequences of Writing: Enhancing Learning in the Disciplines*. Upper Montclair, N.J.: Boynton Cook Publishers, Inc., 1987, p. 55.

What Is the Dialectical Journal?

The dialectical journal is a two-column reading log that students fill in during a *second reading* of a short story, poem, chapter in a novel, or scene from a play. In Column One they copy text that "raises an eyebrow," poses a question, or intrigues them in some way. At the same time, in Column Two they record thoughts, feelings, or questions that come to mind. Teachers should encourage and point out responses in Column Two that reveal critical thinking.

The chart below shows a student's response to William Faulkner's short story "A Rose for Emily."[2]

How Do You Introduce the Dialectical Journal?

Your students will need some explanation and preparation before they begin keeping dialectical journals. The following steps may help you facilitate this preparatory process:

1. Tell students that they are going to use writing as a tool for learning. This explanation may help them to write more easily and encourage them to think more critically, more deeply, about the assigned readings.
2. Tell them that you are going to read aloud a short story. While they are following along, they should underline on their copies any sentences or phrases that they find important or that raise questions for them. *(Select a short story that takes no more than 20 minutes to read so that you have 30 minutes left to introduce the process.)*
3. Once you have read the story, use an overhead projector to display a model of the two-column dialectical journal, which students copy on notebook paper. In Column One copy a passage that you find important. Note the paragraph and page number. In Column Two record your response to that passage. Repeat the process, but this time have your students write their own responses. If time permits, share them aloud.
4. For homework, students complete a minimum of two full pages of a dialectical journal on the same story—making sure that they respond to text from the beginning, the middle, and the end of the story.
5. On a third page students write a brief paragraph that summarizes their understanding of the story and raises questions they may still have. You might want to give them a framework like the one on the next page as a base for this paragraph:

Note Taking: What the Text Says *(Passages selected by the student)*	**Note Making: What the Text Means to Me** *(Responses to selected quotes)*
1. "When Miss Emily Grierson died, our whole town went to her funeral: the men through a sort of respectful affection for a fallen monument, the women mostly out of curiosity to see the inside of her house . . ." (p. 433, para. 1)	1. You can tell a lot about how the town felt about Emily by this one sentence—*the men*—"affection for a fallen monument." You don't feel anything personal for a monument, maybe respect, pride, etc., but no personal feelings. Maybe this means the men never got close. They never knew her, so they pay their respects as if for an object far away. *The women*—another story. Did they even like her? To see her house? Are they just a bunch of snobby, stuck-up women?

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[1] See Ann Berthoff, *The Making of Meaning: Metaphors, Models, and Maxims for Writing Teachers.* Upper Montclair, N.J.: Boynton Cook Publishers, Inc., 1981.

[2] William Faulkner, "A Rose for Emily," in *The Portable Faulkner* (Revised edition). Edited by Malcolm Cowley. New York: Viking Press, Inc., 1974.

In the story, "____________," by __________, the main character struggles with __________. (*Students should write three or four sentences. Encourage them to refer to the text.*)

6. Ask the students to make four copies of this journal because they will be reading parts of it aloud in their small-group discussions.

Below is an excerpt from a student's journal on "A&P," a short story by John Updike.[3]

Sharing Journals

After students have completed their three-page journals, they form small groups in class to share their responses. At the end of the class period, the whole class discusses the assignment together. This process affirms what Ann Berthoff says—that we make our own meanings by putting together what we see, hear, and read—in short, what we experience. She adds that only when teachers trust in their students' capacity to respond and find their own thoughts do they support their students' independence of mind.

John Updike's "A & P" Dialectical Journal

Note Taking (Facts)	Note Making (Feelings and Responses)
"I stood there with my hand on a box of HiHo crackers trying to remember if I rang it up or not." (p. 187)	The sight of the three bathing-suited girls is *enough* to make Sammy lose his concentration?!
"I know it made her day to trip me up." (p. 187)	Negative attitude! He thinks everybody is out to get him?
"Not this queen." (p. 188)	He's singled out one girl—placed her on a pedestal by calling her Queenie. He places her on a pedestal from appearance alone.
"The sheep pushing their carts down the aisle . . ." (p. 190)	What makes him refer to people as sheep? Is he bored with people, seeing them day after day shopping? Is he mad at them?
"I bet you could set off dynamite in an A & P and all the people would by and large keep reaching and checking oatmeal off their lists . . ." (p. 190)	He sees the A & P as a real boring place, boring people making a statement that a bomb wouldn't wake them up.
"Stokesie's married, with two babies chalked up on his fuselage already . . ." (p. 190)	Sammy sees Stokesie as already tied up, in this town, this job, this life. He's already caught.
". . . he thinks he's going to be manager some sunny day . . ." (p. 190)	Is Sammy jealous? Or does he know that Stokesie will never make manager in this place? That nothing happens in this job.

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[3] Page references are to John Updike, *Pigeon Feathers and Other Stories*. Copyright 1962. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc. Reprinted by permission of the publisher.

The dialectical journal extends an invitation to students to delve deeply into a text and, through sustained interaction with that text, to construct their own meanings.

SHEILA KOFF

Here are some suggestions for the small-group sharing:

1. Before the students are assembled in small groups, have them highlight their three favorite sections of their dialectical journals, responses in which they recognize in-depth thinking. They should also highlight the corresponding text from Column One.
2. Once the students are assembled in groups of four or five, each student is assigned a number (1–4 or 5). This number determines each student's specific role in the group discussion:
   - Ones—Ensure that each group member reads his or her summary before reading the highlighted sections of the journals. (Many students resist going from the general to the specific.)
   - Twos—Ensure that all responses that demonstrate critical thinking are presented to the group. (Students should be given the time and opportunity to recognize deeper levels of thinking.)
   - Threes—Keep the presentations rotating and ensure that all presenters have equal time.
   - Fours—Record the group's summary (as dictated) of the responses presented. These summaries should reflect the most salient connections made. The summary begins:

     "In the short story __________ by ________ the main character _____________struggles with (or wants) ___________."
   - Fives—Copy summaries on the chalkboard, notebook paper, or butcher paper taped to a wall.
3. The class then reassembles into a circle for a group discussion. At this point you can validate each group's most perceptive connections and suggest some additional passages and questions they might wish to consider.

Within two to three weeks, my students get used to this learning process—and to the dialectical journal. However, I continue to find it difficult to achieve one of my thorniest objectives—helping them recognize Column-Two responses that show in-depth thinking. This is a major concern because the students, when they produce formal character analyses or comparison-contrast essays, resort to the more familiar five-paragraph themes with little ownership of or elaboration on initial ideas, instead of building from their journals. Even though their prewriting packets reveal thoughtful connections, the students ignore them because they lack the confidence to develop them. I now insist that they highlight *on their nice, clean, final drafts* all sentences that they carry over from their journals and any others that they believe show deeper interpretation.

Expanding the Dialectical Journal

Thanks to Lil Brannon, coauthor of *Rhetorical Traditions and the Teaching of Writing,* the process described on the next page saved me from ordering a rubber stamp that said, "Please elaborate. Can you say anything else about this point?"[4] Complicated to describe, the process is easy for the students to do, either individually or in groups, with butcher paper:

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[4] C. H. Knoblauch and Lil Brannon, *Rhetorical Traditions and the Teaching of Writing.* Upper Montclair, N.J.: Boynton Cook Publishers, Inc., 1984.

1. After small- and large-group discussions of an assigned reading, when your students understand so much more than they did initially, explain to them that you are going to have them record some of these deeper interpretations in their journals.
2. Have students tape together, side by side, their two-page dialectical journals (excluding their summaries). Then have them tape two additional blank pages to the first two.
3. Select an entry from one of the students' journals that reflects critical thinking (or use a previously prepared example). Add a response in Column Three to the student's entry in Column Two. Ask students to expand on your entry and add their responses in Column Four. Repeat this process, beginning with other examples from students' journals.
4. Have students try this process on their own, expanding on entries they have highlighted in their original journals.

It is exciting to see where students go with this open-ended, exploratory writing. Some may be frustrated because they can't think of anything to say in response to a comment in Column Two or Three. They need to know that it is all right to leave some sections blank. Or, when they are at a loss for words, you might suggest that they trade journals and see if a classmate can come up with comments. At other times they may want to write an overflow of sentences as one idea builds on two or three from other columns. To your delight they often grow frustrated because they are out of space.

After going through this process with a few of their journals, students tell me they have many more ideas from their small- and large-group discussions. For them, the original dialectical journal has become just a "warm-up."

The example below illustrates how the expanded journal develops.

Lil Brannon reports that when she used this process to write a research report one summer, the paper practically wrote itself. She attached column after column of butcher paper around the walls of her room, as one idea generated another. I encourage my students to use their multiple-column journals in the same way—as a source of ideas and data for their formal papers. These papers are richer, more concrete, and better supported; and

On Plato's "Myth of the Cave," in the *Republic*, Book VII[5]

1	2	3	4
"You have shown me a stranger image, and they are strange prisoners. Like ourselves, I replied; and they see only their own shadows or the shadows of one another, which the fire throws on the opposite wall of the cave?" (p. 546) "And if they were able to converse with one another, would they not suppose that they were naming what was actually before them?" (p. 547)	We all have shadows or things which are dark blurs to us that we believe to be real. Since everyone is in the dark, each will believe what others name in the shadows. Since they do not know what is right, they cannot argue with what is said.	We do not venture farther into the darkness to discover the truth because we see what we expect to see depending on our needs and situation. If one is unknowing, then he will believe what is shown to him to be right. He does not know what is right; therefore cannot argue—for all his ignorance might be discovered.	If we try to leave or discover the truth, we might discover the fears and dangers connected with it. We might find out something we don't want to know.

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[5] References are to *The Portable Plato*. Translated by Benjamin Jowett. Edited by Scott Buchanan. New York: Viking Press, Inc., 1976.

they reflect more of the student's personal voice than do others, not only because students have used the dialectical journal as a product to write from but also because they have learned from the process of creating the journal.

To me the dialectical journal extends an invitation to students to delve deeply into a text and, through sustained interaction with that text, to construct their own meanings. This is my idea of what critical thinking is all about.

Tapping Multiple Intelligences Through the Literature Book Project

By Carol Booth Olson
Director, UCI Writing Project

Are you a jigsaw puzzle junkie, or do you quit in exasperation when you cannot find even two pieces that fit together?

Which is easier for you to remember—people's names or faces?

Can you walk into a meeting and "read" how people are feeling, or are you surprised when tempers flare halfway through the agenda?

Which sounds like a more formidable task—discovering the symbolic significance of a poem or balancing your checkbook?

Do people ask you to help them fix the sprinklers or the VCR, or are you the one who's asking for the assistance?

Would you rather make up the sayings for people to act out in charades, or would you prefer to be the mime?

Multiple Intelligences

Your answers to these questions may indicate which intelligences you favor as well as those that, given the choice, you might be apt to avoid. The concept that *intelligence* is plural may take some people aback. After all, *intelligence* appears as a singular noun in the dictionary. According to Howard Gardner, however, studies of cognition and neurobiology suggest that we may have a number of different intellectual strengths, or domains of intelligence: each located in discrete parts of the brain; each responsible for a particular human ability; each relatively autonomous from other human faculties; and each progressing through Piagetian-like stages from novice, to apprentice, and, finally, to expert or master at rates influenced not only by heredity but also by cultural values. And although Gardner emphasizes that what he postulates is a theory only, that there will "never be a single irrefutable and universally accepted list of . . . three, seven, or three hundred intelligences,"[1] and that what he proposes are not "physically verifiable entities" but "useful scientific constructs,"[2] his work has given rise to more than a few Ahas! for both students and teachers alike.

Published in 1983, Gardner's book, *Frames of Mind: The Theory of Multiple Intelligences*, offers a provisional list and profiles of seven intelligences that have the "capacity to solve problems or to fashion products that are valued in one or more cultural settings."[3] Brief descriptions of these intelligences appear in the section that follows.

Linguistic Intelligence

As the most widely and democratically shared intellectual competence across all human beings, linguistic intelligence involves a sensitivity to the sounds, rhythms, and meanings of words, as well as to the functions of language. Four aspects of linguistic knowledge "have proved of striking importance in human society":[4]

Rhetorical Aspect—Ability to use language to convince and persuade others of a course of action or point of view

Mnemonic Aspect—Ability to use language as a tool for remembering

Explanation Aspect—Ability to use language to convey instructions and information, both orally and in writing

Metalinguistic Aspect—Ability to use language to reflect on language

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[1] Howard Gardner, *Frames of Mind: The Theory of Multiple Intelligences.* New York: HarperCollins Publishers Inc., Basic Books, Inc., Publishers, 1983, p. 60. Selected quotations are from Gardner, Howard. *Frames of Mind: The Theory of Multiple Intelligences.* New York: HarperCollins Publishers Inc., Basic Books Publishers, Inc., 1983. Reprinted with permission from HarperCollins Publishers Inc. Copyright 1984 by Howard Gardner.

[2] Gardner, *Frames of Mind*, p. 70.

[3] Howard Gardner and Thomas Hatch, "Multiple Intelligences Go to School: Educational Implications of the Theory of Multiple Intelligences," *Educational Researcher*, Vol. 18, No. 8 (November, 1989), 5.

[4] Gardner, *Frames of Mind*, p. 78.

Musical Intelligence

Often viewed as a gift rather than a form of thinking, musical intelligence calls for a keen auditory sense; a feel for patterns and rhythms, pitch and tonality; and an appreciation for the forms of musical expression. Whereas there is a considerable emphasis in the schools on linguistic attainment, music "occupies a relatively low niche in our culture."[5] However, in some cultures—China, Japan, and Hungary, for example—musical intelligence is highly prized.

Logical-Mathematical Intelligence

While linguistic and musical capacities originate in the auditory-oral sphere, logical-mathematical intelligence "can be traced to a confrontation with the world of objects."[6] It requires sensitivity to and the ability to discern logical or numerical patterns, memory for and the capacity to handle long chains of reasoning, an appreciation of the links between propositions, and a love of abstraction and problem solving. Whereas linguistic intelligence is the most democratically shared of all the intelligences, logical-mathematical intelligence is spread unequally across the population. Further, some of the most lasting contributions in humanistic scholarship have been made by individuals in their sixties, seventies, and even eighties; however, the peak period for contributions in the logical-mathematical domain is during the third and fourth decades of life. Logical-mathematical intelligence has been placed at a premium in the schools, largely because of Piaget's influence. He perceived logical thought as "the glue that holds together all cognition,"[7] and his theories have been a driving force behind intelligence testing.

Spatial Intelligence

Spatially intelligent people have a heightened capacity to perceive the visual-spatial world and to mentally recreate aspects of visual experience—even in the absence of physical stimuli. Three components of spatial ability are the ability to (1) recognize the identity of an object seen from different angles; (2) imagine movement or internal displacement among the parts of a configuration; and (3) think about spatial relations. Psychologist Rudolph Arnheim has argued that the most important operations of thinking come directly from our perceptions of the world because unless we can conjure up a visual image of a concept, we will be unable to think about it clearly. Albert Einstein, who derived many of his insights from spatial models, is a case in point. As Einstein once said:

> The words or the language, as they are written or spoken, do not seem to play any role in my mechanism of thought. The psychical entities which seem to serve as elements in thought are certain signs and more or less clear images which can be voluntarily reproduced or combined. . . . The above mentioned elements are, in my case, of visual and some of muscular type.[8]

Bodily-Kinesthetic Intelligence

In recent years psychologists have seen a close link between the use of the body and other cognitive powers. Bodily-kinesthetic intelligence involves a well-honed sense of timing, an ability to anticipate what an opponent will do next, a control of one's bodily movements, an overall smoothness of performance, and an automaticity of certain reflexes or activities. Interestingly, Gardner identifies the use of tools by primates as the first developmental sign of bodily-kinesthetic intelligence.

The Personal Intelligences

Two forms of intelligence that are almost virtually ignored by students of cognition are **intrapersonal** and **interpersonal** intelligence. It is easy to understand how those that see a clear division between thought and emotion would relegate both intrapersonal intelligence (access to one's own feeling life) and interpersonal intelligence (ability to read the intentions and desires of others) solely to the affective domain. However, Gardner sees the personal intelligences as "information-processing capacities—one directed inward, the other directed outward."[9] The integration of these two intelligences, which leads to a firmly developed sense of self, "appears as the highest achievement of human beings."[10]

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[5] Gardner, *Frames of Mind*, p. 109.

[6] Gardner, *Frames of Mind*, p. 129.

[7] Gardner, *Frames of Mind*, p. 134.

[8] Albert Einstein quoted by Jacques Hadamard in *An Essay on the Psychology of Invention in the Mathematical Field*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1945, pp. 142–143. Reprinted by permission of the publisher.

[9] Gardner, *Frames of Mind*, p. 243.

Just as it takes the integration of the personal intelligences to foster a well-developed sense of self, so too it is the interaction and integration of "complexes of intelligences functioning together smoothly, even seamlessly [that enable us to engage in and] execute intricate human activities."[11]

Because the theory of multiple intelligences has profound implications for educators and education itself, I include this concept as an essential curricular component in my Elementary Language Arts Methods class for teaching credential candidates at the University of California, Irvine. My students need to know, for example, that as teachers we are apt to lead with our strong suit, a tendency that, to use an analogy, may leave certain "players" in the classroom out of the game. Further, we may be unconsciously drawn to those students who share our intellectual preferences. Given that we are obligated to provide all schoolchildren with opportunities to learn and to feel successful, we must identify and capitalize on their strengths and use them as tools to foster their less-developed or practiced intelligences.

The Literature Book Project

To help my students translate this conceptual framework into something practical, I ask them to illustrate their understanding of Howard Gardner's theories by creating a tangible teaching material with a work of children's literature as a springboard. The directions I give the students for their literature book projects are as follows:

> You will be given an opportunity to choose a work of literature that you would like to use in the classroom and to design a literature book project. After you have read a work of children's literature of your choice and thought about how you might teach it, your goal is to think of a tangible teaching material that you can use to introduce students to your book or to use as a teaching tool during the course of reading or writing about the work of literature. You are encouraged to use your imagination and make this project fun as well as something you can use in your teaching career. Book projects in a previous class included game boards, collages, dioramas, mobiles, models, felt boards, objects containing other objects, greeting cards, and so forth. As you design your project, keep Howard Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences in mind. Your project should tap two or more intelligences and give students with diverse learning styles an opportunity to shine. Literature book projects should be accompanied by a one-page statement of their purpose, including an explanation of how your project relates to the theory of multiple intelligences. Your literature book project will be shared in class and evaluated on a 1 to 6 scale determined by you and your classmates.

I never cease to be amazed by the thoughtful, creative, entertaining, and educational projects devised by my teaching credential candidates. Two of these projects are described on the pages that follow.

My hope is that, influenced by the theory of multiple intelligences, a host of new and experienced teachers at all grade levels will enrich their teaching repertoire with a variety of strategies that tap not just one or two but the full spectrum of the intelligences so that all students have an opportunity to shine. One step toward discovering students' strengths, after modeling a teacher-designed literature book / multiple intelligences project, might be to encourage your students to give their imaginations free reign and design their own projects based on a work of literature of their choice.

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[10] Gardner, *Frames of Mind*, pp. 242–43.

[11] Gardner, *Frames of Mind*, p. 279.

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THE SECRET GARDEN

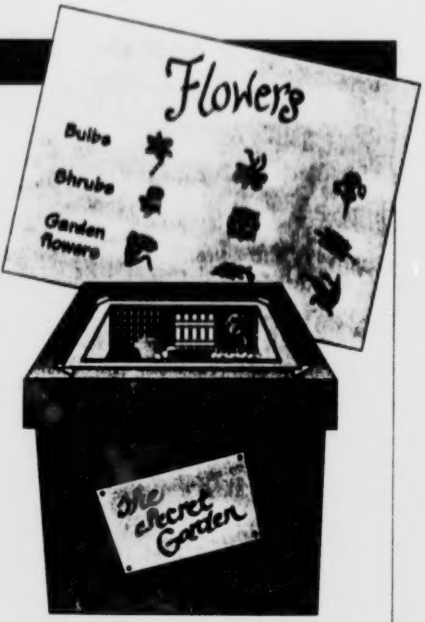

Fig. 4. *The Secret Garden*

Based on *The Secret Garden* by Frances Hodgson Burnett (New York: Bantam Books, 1987), Jody Ann Sinclair Jones's project integrates science, art, reading, and writing. The project itself has two visual aids: a diorama of a garden (complete with trellis, strawflowers, walkway, white picket fence, and painted backdrop), which is designed to stimulate the children's imaginations about flowers and plants and what gardens look like; and a flower chart, painted in watercolors, which is the centerpiece of a botany lesson. Both are intended to be prominently displayed while the story is being read orally to the class (for students in fourth through sixth grades) during a two- to three-week period. The role of the diorama, displayed early in the reading of the book, is to stimulate curiosity about the secret garden. Later, this display becomes a model for dioramas that the students make of their own secret gardens. The flower chart is intended as a visual referent and as an inspiration to the students when they begin studying flowers at the point in the story when Mary finds the key and gains access to the secret garden. In addition to using spatial intelligence to design their dioramas and draw their own flowers, students use kinesthetic intelligence to dissect flowers and also to choose several types of flowers to plant and grow in class.

Once students complete their art project, they will use linguistic intelligence to write a creative story about their own secret garden—what it would look like, whom they would invite there, and what magical qualities it would have. Sinclair notes, "Originally when I planned this project, I was excited about the creative writing aspect. But, when I started drawing the flowers, I remembered how interesting that activity was and how exciting planting seeds and watching them grow in a class setting was." Therefore, the culmination of the project is the planting of a class garden, if a small plot of earth is available at the school site. Sinclair writes, "I think that studying flowers and creating a class garden could be especially meaningful to children who grow up in apartments and who have never had that 'little corner of earth' that Mary eventually acquires from her guardian."

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THE PHANTOM TOLLBOOTH

When you walk into the sixth grade classroom that Sabrina La Rocca has planned for the not-too-distant future, you will be entering the Kingdom of Wisdom. But first you must pass through the Gateway to Knowledge, a life-size replica of the tollbooth from *The Phantom Tollbooth* by Norton Juster (New York: Random House, 1961). "Just as Milo had to pass by the tollbooth on his journey to the Kingdom of Wisdom, so too my students will have to pass by on their journey to their seats," writes Sabrina. The students go into the tollbooth each day to discover the day's assignment, which might be oriented intrapersonally or interpersonally. Each of the lands Milo visits is the springboard for an activity center. For example, the Coin-a-Phrase box on the side of the tollbooth, which relates to Milo's adventures in Dictionopolis, asks students to use their linguistic intelligence to coin a new phrase and slip it into the box for extra credit.

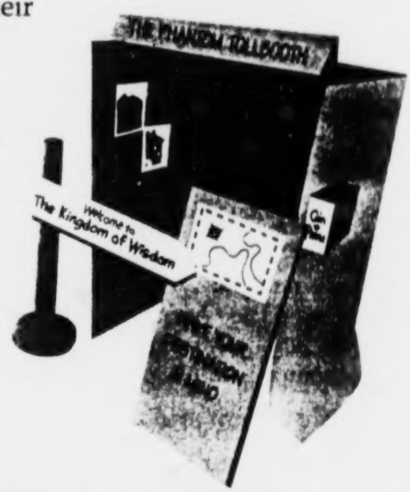

Fig. 5. *The Phantom Toll Booth*

In the Forest of Sights, students will listen to selections of music and write their reactions in learning logs. In Digitopolis students are urged to write at least six mathematical equations or story problems that will challenge their classmates and so forth. With each new land come new educational adventures. "After two chapters of reading, I predict that the kids will be hooked," says Sabrina. Using basic instructions to assemble a tollbooth, the students will also individually design a new tollbooth, select one as a class, and use spatial and kinesthetic intelligence to construct it. "Before Milo entered the tollbooth, he was a bored kid with no interest in learning, studying, or observing," writes Sabrina. "After his experiences in the Kingdom of Wisdom, he was transformed; he wanted to embrace knowledge and all that life had to offer him. Perhaps his biggest realization, by the end of his adventures, was that he could take responsibility for his own knowledge. My hope is that my students, like Milo, will enter the Kingdom of Wisdom with a strong desire to embrace knowledge."

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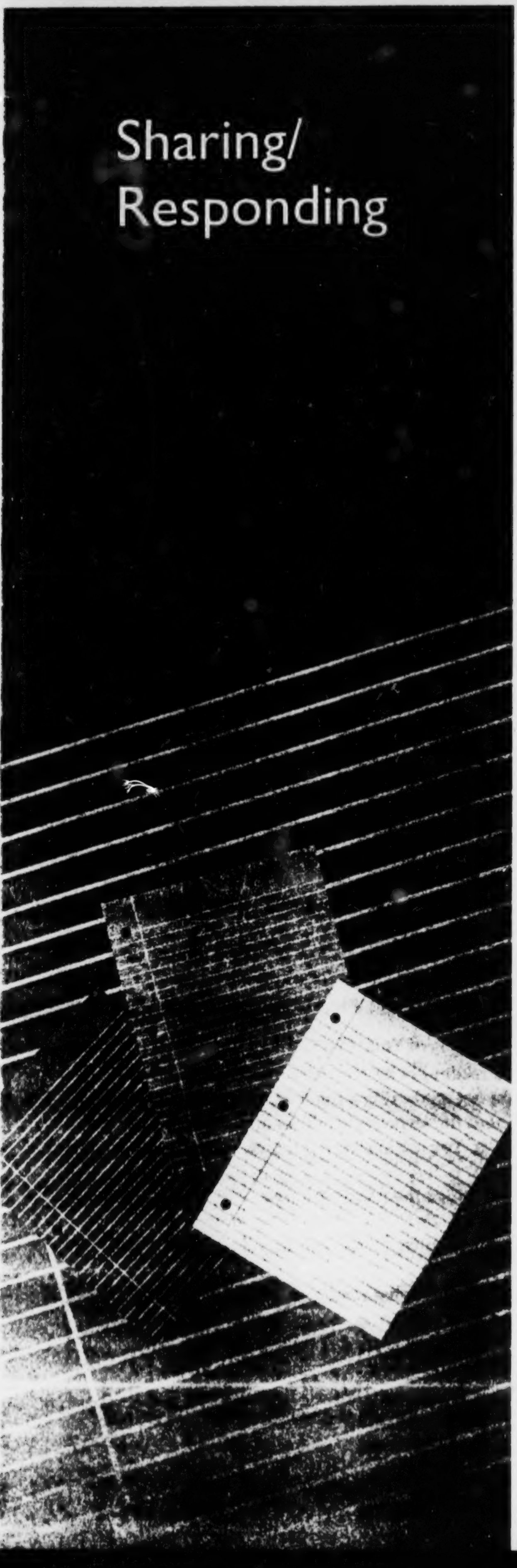

Sharing/Responding

Some Guidelines for Writing-Response Groups

By Peter Elbow
Director of Composition,
State University of New York, Stony Brook

To improve your writing, you do not need advice on what changes to make, and you do not need theories of what is good and bad writing. You need *movies* of people's minds while they read your words. But you need the movies for a sustained period of time—at least two or three months. And you need to get the reactions of not just a couple of people but of at least six or seven. And you need to keep getting them from the *same* people so that they get better at transmitting descriptions of their experiences and you get better at hearing them. And you must write something every week. Even if you are very busy, even if you have nothing to write about, and even if you experience writer's block, you must write something and try to experience it through those other people's eyes. Of course the writing may not be good; you may not be satisfied with it. But if you learn only how people perceive and experience words you are satisfied with, you are missing a crucial area of learning. You often learn the most from reactions to words that you hate.

In the paragraphs that follow, I will try to help you set up and use a writing-response group. If you get confused, remember that everything is designed to serve only one utterly simple goal: The writers should learn how their words were *actually* experienced by their particular readers.

Setting Up the Class

Learning to make use of a class that depends heavily on students' responses to each other's writing is a struggle. To develop this kind of class,

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EDITOR'S NOTE: We are grateful to Oxford University Press for permission to reprint excerpts from *Writing Without Teachers* by Peter Elbow. Copyright 1973 by Oxford University Press, Inc. For further information on the use of writing-response groups, see *Writing Without Teachers* (1975) and *Writing with Power: Techniques for Mastering the Writing Process* (1981), both published by Oxford University Press, Inc., 198 Madison Avenue, New York, NY 10016.

I always try to write on the principle of the iceberg. There is seven-eighths of it under water for every part that shows. Anything you know, you can eliminate, and it only strengthens your iceberg.

ERNEST HEMINGWAY

you need a committed group of students. You need the same people writing and taking part every week so that they have the time to get better at giving reactions and hearing them. You need to maintain the initial commitment of the class so that everyone continues to participate.

The main thing to remember in setting up the class is that *what* you and your students write does not matter as long as you write something. Treat the rigid requirement as a blessing. Since the class must produce something every week, expect some of the writing to be terrible. You and your students cannot improve your writing unless you put out words differently from the way you put them out now and find out how your readers experience these new kinds of writing. You cannot try out new ways of generating words unless many of them feel embarrassing, terrible, or frightening. But you and your students will be surprised in two ways. Some passages that you currently hate you will discover to be good later. And some of the reactions that most improve your writing are brought on by terrible writing—writing you would not have shown to someone if you had had more time to rewrite the material.

Use whatever procedure you think is best for deciding what to write. Write the same kind of thing over and over again—even the same piece over and over again if you wish. Or try out wildly different things. There is no best or right way. If you have the desire to write, you probably dream of doing some particular kind of writing. Do it. Or if there is something different that you believe you should work on first, follow your own advice.

Should you hand out copies of what the class has written or read the writing out loud? Both ways have their advantages. Giving out copies to the class saves class time because silent reading is quicker; you can stop and think, go back, read more carefully, and if the piece of writing is long, you can let students take it home and read it there. This procedure may be more possible than you think. Many photocopying processes are cheap; or making three to five copies from carbon paper is easy, and writing or typing onto duplicating masters is easy. Class members may leave a single copy of their writing where everyone else can read it carefully before class.

But reading out loud is good, too. When you and your class read your writing out loud, you often hear things in it that you do not experience any other way. Hearing your own words spoken gives you the vicarious experience of being someone else. Reading your words out loud stresses what is most important. Writing is really a voice spread out over time, not marks spread out in space. The audience cannot experience words all at once as they can a picture. They can only hear one instant at a time, as with music.

When you read something out loud in class, always read it twice and allow at least a minute of silence after each reading for impressions to become clearer for your listeners.

Giving Movies of Your Mind

As a reader giving reactions, keep in mind that you are not answering a timeless, theoretical question about the objective qualities of those words on that page. You are answering a time-bound, subjective but *factual* question: What happened in *you* when you read the words *this time?*

Pointing to the words. Start giving your reactions by simply pointing to the words and phrases which most successfully penetrated your skull: Perhaps they seemed loud or full of voice, or they seemed to have a lot of energy, or they somehow rang true, or they carried special conviction. Any kind of *getting through* is possible. If I have the piece of writing in my hand, I tend to put a line under such words and phrases (or longer passages) as I read. Later when telling my reactions, I can try to say which kind of *getting through* it was if I happen to remember. If I am listening to the piece read out loud, I simply wait until the end and see which words or phrases stick in my mind. I may jot them down as they come to me in the moments of silence after the readings.

Point also to any words or phrases which strike you as particularly weak or empty. Somehow they ring false, hollow, or plastic. They bounce ineffectually off your skull. (I use a wavy line for these when I read with a pencil.)

Summarizing the writing. Another way to give your reactions to a piece of writing is to summarize it. This can be done by following these procedures:

1. First, tell very quickly what you found to be the main points, main feelings, or centers of gravity. Just sort of say what comes to mind for 15 seconds; for example, " Let's see, very sad; the death seemed to be the main event; um . . . but the joke she told was very prominent; lots of clothes."
2. Next, summarize the writing in a single sentence.
3. Then choose one word from the writing which best summarizes it.
4. And, finally, choose a word that is not in the writing to summarize it.

Do this procedure informally. Do not plan or think too much about it. The point is to show the writer what things he or she made stand out the most, what shape the thing takes in your consciousness. This is not a test to see whether you got the words right. It is a test to see whether the words got *you* right. Be sure to use different language from the language of the writing. This ensures that the writing is filtered through your perception and experience, not just parroted. Also, try this test a week later: Tell someone what you remember of his or her last week's piece.

Pointing and summarizing are not only the simplest ways to communicate your perception but also the most foolproof and the most useful. Always start with pointing and summarizing. If you want to play it safe and make sure your class is successful, if you are terribly short of class time, or if your class is coming apart, try skipping all the following ways of giving feedback.

Telling the writer what happened. Simply tell the writer everything that happened to you as you tried to read his or her words carefully. It is usually easiest to tell what happened in the form of a story. First this happened, then this happened, then this happened, and so on. Here is an example of *telling* from the tape recording of an actual class:

> I felt confused about the man in the gray suit and the men gathered around you. I suppose they're the cops and the escorts. I had first thought [that] the [person in the] gray suit was a cop, but then I thought he was a dignified person who got arrested. I was uncertain about it. And then you talked about the men gathered around at one point—fairly early. I felt like they were cops, and I wanted you to contrast them to the fantasies.
>
> There was one point where you talked about—I think you were going down the stairs—and I felt like that whole part with the father of the bride and the gown was like the flash a person has supposedly, when he's going to drown and his whole life flows before him. I thought it was like an initiation of a girl—or a woman, particularly—out of her whole parental, social, ball-gown past into this new thing. And I was, I just, I was surprised. I didn't expect you to describe things that way. I was really happy. Then for some reason I felt like when you talked about the men who were gathered around—I felt like they were cops—and if I heard it again I might feel like I didn't need to have you say it, but at the time, as you said it, I wanted them to be blue-suited or something contrasting. Perhaps that wouldn't be necessary for some other reader.
>
> I had a very sort of happy feeling when you went to drinking songs. But it felt like the whole history of someone's life from being a young bride to becoming an old fishwife. I felt like it was a social comment in a way. One gets brought up and goes from the ideal fantasies to being fat and a drinking companion in pubs. And I was just very happy at that change in age. It seemed like the whole thing was—if it were a movie it would be going around like this—but the history of a whole person in a way retold in capsule form.

The important thing in telling is not to get too far away from talking about the actual writing. People sometimes waste time talking only about themselves. But on the other hand, do not drift too far away from talking about yourself either, or else you are acting as though you are a perfectly objective, selfless critic.

To help you in *telling*, pretend that there is a whole set of instruments you have hooked up to yourself that record everything that occurs in you, not just pulse, blood pressure, and so on, but also ones that tell every image, feeling, thought, and word that happens in you. Pretend that you have hooked them all up and that now you are just reading the printout from the machines.

Showing the writer your reaction. When you read something, you have some perceptions and reactions which you are not fully aware of and thus cannot " tell." Perhaps they are very faint, perhaps you do not have satisfactory language for them, or perhaps for some other reason you remain unconscious of them. But though you cannot *tell* these perceptions and reactions, you can *show* them if you are willing to use some of the metaphorical exercises listed below. These may seem strange and difficult at first; but if you use them consistently, you will learn to tap knowledge which you have but which is usually unavailable to you:

- Talk about the writing as though you were describing voices; for example, shouting, whining, whispering, lecturing sternly, droning, speaking abstractedly. Try to apply such words not only to the whole thing but also to different parts.
- Talk about the writing as though you were talking about weather; for example, foggy, sunny, gusty, drizzling, cold, clear, crisp, muggy, and so forth. Use this approach not just with the whole thing but with different parts.
- Talk about the writing as though you were talking about motion or locomotion; for example, as marching, climbing, crawling, rolling along, tiptoeing, strolling, sprinting.
- Other ways to use this approach to talk about writing are as follows:

  Clothing: for example, jacket and tie, dungarees, dusty and sweaty shirt, miniskirt, hair all slicked down.

  Terrain: for example, hilly, desert, soft and grassy, forested, jungle, clearing in a forest.

  Color: for example, what color is the whole? the parts? *Shape:* for example, square, round, oblong, triangular, cylindrical.

  Animals: for example, cat, lion, mouse, frog, moose, bear, elephant, gazelle.

  Vegetables: for example, carrot, broccoli, cauliflower, lettuce.

  Musical instruments: for example, trumpet, flute, drum, clarinet, tuba, trombone, violin, oboe.

  A body: for example, what kind of body? which parts are feet, hands, heart, head, hair?
- Think of the piece of writing as having magically evolved out of a different piece of writing, and it will eventually evolve into some other piece of writing that again is different. Tell where it came from, where it is going.
- Describe what you think the writer's intention was with this piece of writing. Then think of some crazy intention you think he or she might have had.
- Assume that the writer wrote the piece that is being discussed *instead* of something very different from what was really on his or her mind. Guess or fantasize what you think was really on the writer's mind.
- Assume that soon before the author wrote this piece, he or she did something very important or something very important happened to him or her—something that is not obvious from the writing. Say what you think it was.
- Pretend that this piece was written by someone you have never seen. Guess or fantasize what he or she is like.
- The writing is a lump of workable clay. Tell what you would do with that clay.
- Pretend to be someone else—someone who would have a very different response to the writing from what you had. Give this other

> *. . . to write well, there are required three Necessaries. To reade the best Authors, observe the best Speakers: and much exercise [one's] owne style.*
>
> BEN JONSON

person's perception and experience of the writing.

- Draw quickly the picture or doodle that the writing inspires in you. Pretend that the writing was received only by your arm with its pencil; now let them move.
- Make the sound the writing inspires or imitate the sound of the writing. Make different sounds for different parts.
- Jabber the writing; that is, make the sound you would hear if someone were giving a somewhat exaggerated reading of it in the next room—in a language you had never heard (also compress the writing into 30 seconds or so).
- Let your whole body make the movements inspired by the writing or different parts of it. Perhaps combine sounds and movements.
- Do a ten-minute writing exercise on the writing, and give it to the writer.
- Meditate on the writing and try to tell the author about what happened. Do not think about his or her writing. Try, even, to make your mind empty, but at the same time fully open to the writing. It is as though you do not chew and do not taste—just swallow it whole and noiselessly.

These *showing* procedures are not very useful until you get over being afraid of them and unless you give two or three at a time. Therefore, I make it a rule that for your first four classes, you make at least a couple of these oblique, metaphorical statements on each piece of writing. This procedure may seem strange and uncomfortable at first. Indeed, the reason I make this an explicit demand is that I have discovered that people in some trial writing-response groups were too timid to use them. In other classes where people did use them, almost everyone came to enjoy them and find them useful.

Do not struggle with these procedures. Try to let the words just come. Say the thing that comes to mind, even if it does not make any sense. And for the first few weeks, do not expect satisfactory results.

There is an easy way to think of the relation between telling and showing. Telling is like looking inside yourself to see what you can report. Showing is like installing a window in the top of your head and then taking a bow so the writers can see for themselves. There is no need to try to remember what was happening as you read. Just bow. Showing conveys more information but in a more mixed and ambiguous form than telling.

Further Advice to Readers

The following additional advice is given to help readers become more effective in the writing-response group:

- Make sure you have had a good chance to read the writing.
- Never quarrel with someone else's reaction.
- Give specific reactions to specific parts.
- No kind of reaction is wrong.
- Though no reactions are wrong, you still have to try to read well.
- Sometimes you may not want to give your reactions; respect this feeling.
- You are always right and always wrong. (You are always right in that no one is ever in a position to tell you what you perceive and experience. But you are always wrong in that you never see accurately enough, experience fully enough.)

Advice to Writers on Listening

The following advice is given to help writers benefit from their readers' comments in a writing-response group:

- Be quiet and listen.
- Do not try to understand what people tell you; just listen and take it all in.
- But do try to understand *how* they make their comments.
- Do not reject what readers tell you.
- Do not stop them from giving you reactions.
- But do not be tyrannized by what they say.
- Ask for the specific feedback you want, but do not play teacher with them.
- You are always right and always wrong. (You are always right in that your decision about the writing is always final. But you are always wrong in that you can never quarrel with their experience—never quarrel even with their report of their experience.)

Practical Ideas for Sharing/Responding

At First . . . And at Last

By Julie Simpson

English Teacher, Sunny Hills High School,
Fullerton Joint Union High School District;
and Teacher/Consultant, UCI Writing Project

When it came to writing, I had considered myself to be the epitome of the expression, "Those who can, do; those who can't, teach." I was the one in college who invariably turned in her term papers late and who knew full well they were not good. I was the one who shopped around for years to find a master's program in her field that did not require a thesis. So it was with great trepidation that I applied to become a UCI Writing Project Fellow. I wanted to learn about teaching writing; I just did not want to have to do any of it in the process.

In the first paper I wrote for my writing group, I explored my frustrations:

> So much fear surrounds the idea of writing—fears of mediocrity, fears of criticism, fears of rejection. What if I "dare disturb the universe?" What if I open my gut and expose my sincerest thoughts and efforts to the world—and it yawns?
>
> Here I am, supposed to write something. Anything. And it's Sunday night, and I've been thinking for days and have nothing to say. No creative Ahas! have come at the end of any of the various clusters I've begun. I have a few ideas. But no faith. And thus no words. I sit—imageless, plotless, metaphorless. Empty.
>
> It's so much safer to be an audience, to read and react to others' writings—to find people who speak for me and who do it better than I ever could. Obviously, my ideas can't be as significant as those of the greats who have gone before me. I have nothing new to say. When I think of things to write, other people's lines and characters and plots surge through my mind, drowning any spark of originality I might hope for.
>
> I suppose I should have confidence enough to realize that since no one has seen the significant truths of the universe through my eyes, I could at least add my personal vision to the ocean of visions already written. I have subjects. I want to write about having to endure aloneness and continual loss—the process of living. But I am no Alan Watts. I want to write about "passion" and how it is essential, even though it creates all the pains of life. But I am no Peter Shaffer. I want to write a story or poem about the exquisite pain of being separated from the one you dearly love. I want to create the eternity of a day without him. And to describe the surprise of recognizing that moments passed when you actually thought of something other than him, when you actually entered the world for a little while. But I am no Emily Dickinson or Edna St. Vincent Millay.
>
> I want to write a story juxtaposing the interior, real, reality with the exterior game of reality we all play. I want to be able to create a slice of life that would portray the struggle of getting through another outward day, pretending to focus on it and to thrive in it, while all the while living only in a secret, emotional other world that is the true reality. But this is so personal that it would take the perfect words to communicate precisely what I mean. And I have no plot in mind. And I don't know how to create characters or dialog. And, and, and . . . .
>
> And I'm afraid that someone might stop midsentence and complain, "How boring!" I'd feel "pinned and wriggling on the wall," and it wouldn't have been worth it, after all.

That is how I began. I understood, firsthand now, my students' hesitations and anxieties about writing. I felt as inferior as they did. But within the five weeks of the Writing Project, I learned to deal with my fears. Having a supportive, interested writing group that responded to my work from a personal as well as a professional perspective made all the difference.

Here is an excerpt from my final position paper:

> Besides reinforcing a couple of truisms I have always known, the Writing Project has exposed me to essential new ideas that will permanently affect my teaching. Learning about developing fluency through the domains of writing has taught me a most valuable awareness: Students must be viewed as writers. The fact that I was considered a writer from the start of the Writing Project was undoubtedly the biggest

learning experience of the summer. I tried to fight it and insist that I had nothing to say, but I got hooked, nonetheless. I have learned that, either inside me or outside in the world through my eyes, there *is* something that I can write about. And every time I come up with an idea, I feel proud: Hey! I can do that. I have learned that a subject doesn't have to be unique to be writable. And I've learned that I can conquer the battle of how to show an idea once I have it: I can always make it more concrete—to communicate. I feel proud about my own words; I no longer demand that they be great. I look forward to sharing them with others.

I want my students to discover the same sort of satisfaction in writing and sharing and to experience the same sort of pride in their work as I do in mine.

When I treat students as writers, I accept that they have a warehouse of experiences, sensations, ideas, and reactions to write about. My job then becomes one of a facilitator more than an evaluator. I can help them tap their resources. I can help them view themselves as writers and, in a way, as more significant people.

Response Groups in the Business Writing Class

By Sheila Koff
Instructor of English, Orange Coast College;
and Teacher/Consultant, UCI Writing Project

Dashing up the steep two flights of stairs to my business writing class at California State University, Fullerton, clutching my latest transparencies and duplicated copies, I wondered whether this day's lesson might possibly create that rare, authentic learning environment that was so satisfying for my previous composition students. Although I had taught business writing as a component of other classes on other college campuses, I had never had a class of junior and senior business majors, focusing entirely on business writing. As I struggled to get my fingertips around the slippery door knob, I was not sure whether my gasping resulted from my sprint up the stairs or from the fear that the lesson might not work. These strongwilled, opinionated, future business leaders just might balk at sharing their hard work with a group of peers, even if the spirit of cooperation is encouraged in this competitive world.

Since it was the first Friday of the spring semester, I did not yet know their 28 names, nor did they know each other, which only increased my apprehension on entering the room.

"Good morning. Hello," I nodded to blurred strangers, trying to manufacture a smile. "Today, as I explained to you this past Wednesday, I would like you all to arrange your desks in circles of five." Chairs rumbled and screeched as metal scraped more scuffs into those already marking the ancient gray linoleum. Uncomfortable and embarrassed faces now nervously perused pens, rough drafts, and peeling nail polish.

"Before you begin this assignment, would you please take about five to ten minutes to introduce yourselves to your group. Go counter-clockwise until all have been introduced."

In spite of several years of using Peter Elbow's response groups from his *Writing Without Teachers*, I have yet to willingly let go of my need for teacher control. As always, at first, the students were ill at ease in their unfamiliar circles—and so was I. My confidence disintegrated a little more with each of their dubious or painful side glances to one another.

Just to reassure myself, I reviewed my notes from Wednesday about why the response group is used. The majority of these students were unfamiliar with group sharing. But they had agreed on Wednesday that since writing is a process of continually refocusing for clarity, it would be beneficial to read their first and second drafts aloud in groups. They also agreed that writing for a real purpose, to convey a message, and for their peers, whom they would soon know, was more realistic than writing for a letter grade and for an instructor they would probably know only formally.

While I was passing out duplicated copies of Peter Elbow's pointing steps, I listened to some laughter and inquiring comments rising from the group members' introductions. Breathing a little easier, I began to review gently and carefully with them Peter Elbow's pointing steps, along with the writing rubric on the overhead transparency.

Because they were anxious to begin sharing their first drafts of business memos, I then instructed one writer in each group to pass out his or her four copies to the other group members.

Sometimes while weaving unobtrusively around the sharing and pointing circles, I would catch and correct potential problems. Some reticent native speakers and shy second-language learners tried to avoid reading aloud by suggesting that the group members silently read their papers. Some groups forgot the positive commenting phase and immediately began making negative comments. As expected, others focused on grammatical problems that are better reserved for a later editing stage of the process. It was easy to help individual responders point to specifics in each person's writing and to suggest that they keep an eye on the rubric adapted for that particular writing assignment. Although initially I felt shaky in my new observer-facilitator role, I soon reaped the benefits from gently insisting on strict adherence to Peter Elbow's guidelines. The students were better able to help each other, and I quickly adjusted to their not regularly needing me. I was impressed by the intense cooperation shared by these highly competitive students as they helped each other toward individual excellence.

During the last five minutes of class, after at least three papers had been shared in each group, I asked the students to write anonymous accounts of how they felt about their first interaction with group members. My fears were all for naught. Here are some reactions:

> I feel that the group meeting is a very effective idea. It gives people in the class a good way of having a peer review of their work. Also, it gives students a chance to participate in the class on a group and on an individual basis.
>
> I like the idea of meeting in groups to discuss our papers. It helps to see how other members in the group have approached the assignment and exposes the different styles of writing they have acquired. The group meetings should continue, as everyone in the group benefits from the experience.
>
> I feel quite comfortable with my group. They make constructive comments and offer good ideas for improvement.
>
> I have found the group interaction most helpful. We have been able to generate a lot of ideas about our assignment. These ideas will help me in preparing my final draft. In addition, my group is friendly and therefore not shy about offering criticisms, as well as compliments. We all get along well, so I think we will be able to help one another more as the semester continues. (I think I should also mention that prior to this semester, I had a negative attitude about group work, but that has changed as a result of this class.)
>
> I believe working with a group is a good way to improve your writing. Everyone can help each other in organizing structure, word choice, and grammar. In addition, people in a group always give you good ideas or suggestions to make your essay better. However, we should have a group leader so he or she can pull us back to reality when we go too far outside the topic that we're discussing.

Other than the last comment about the need for a group leader, the only other suggestion was that groups should be carefully monitored by the instructor to ensure that all members participate.

Many weeks later, after several kinds of group interaction had occurred, I knew that the students needed less of my intervention to facilitate their group process. And the problem with inactive members resolved itself simply from group pressure and the high expectations of individual members.

My business writing students adapted easily to Peter Elbow's peer-response groups, energetically teaching each other—a few even pleading for the chance to do third drafts. Meanwhile, I warily eye my multiplying stack of papers to be graded; but I am comforted by the fact that I will be reading writing that has evolved and improved because of peer group responses.

Reader Responses

Dialogue with a Text

By Robert E. Probst
Professor of English Education,
Georgia State University

A Story:

The entire class, but especially one girl sitting directly in front of me, was intrigued by the story. It was C. D. B. Bryan's "So Much Unfairness of Things," and the unfairness of which it spoke seemed to trouble and awaken the students.[1] They stirred, noticeably uncomfortable and disturbed, when the time came to discuss the reading.

The story is that of a student at a tough preparatory school in Virginia who finds himself in difficulty with his Latin course and succumbs to the temptation to cheat on an examination. He regrets the lapse immediately and painfully, but too late. He is reported and is summarily removed from the school. The story ends as his father takes him away from the campus.

Many of the students must have been painfully aware of the complexity of the situation Bryan had created. P. S., as the student is called, had no intention of cheating. It wasn't planned or premeditated. He hadn't even considered the possibility. Not until well into the examination does he realize that the translation of the test passage is in his desk—he hadn't brought it to the exam planning to use it—and even then he fights the temptation. But he *is* in desperate straits, having failed the exam the year before. He needs to pass it to graduate, and he doesn't want to stay at the school another year or go to summer school. Things are not going well on the exam, he is obviously in bad shape, and the

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EDITOR'S NOTE: We are grateful to the *English Journal* for permission to reprint excerpts from "Dialogue with a Text" by Robert Probst (January, 1988). For further information on the reader response approach to literature, see Robert E. Probst, *Response and Analysis: Teaching Literature in Junior and Senior High School* (1987), published by Boynton Cook Publishers, Heinemann Educational Books, Inc., 70 Court Street, Portsmouth, NH 03801.

[1] C. D. B. Bryan, "So Much Unfairness of Things," in *Literature and Life*. Edited by Helen McDonnell and others. Glenview, Ill.: Scott, Foresman and Co., 1979, pp. 342–367. Originally published in *The New Yorker*, 1962.

notes are there in his desk. The temptation is just too great. He slides the sheet out, copies the translation, and goes off to his room in terror.

If somewhat too casual about his work, too easily distracted from his studies, P. S. is nonetheless a pleasant, good-natured, likable fellow, not habitually dishonest and corrupt and not the sort of character whose punishment the readers could watch with equanimity. It must have been easy for the students to imagine themselves in a similar situation. On the other hand they could not permit themselves the satisfaction of railing against the teacher and the headmaster who expel P. S. Both the Latin teacher, Dr. Fairfax, and the headmaster, Mr. Seaton, appear to be kind men, nearly as upset and unhappy with the situation as P. S. is. Bound by the school's strict honor code, they have little choice but to abide by its demands. Even the student who reported P. S. is a good fellow whose motivations are respectable. There is no villain to blame and thus relieve the reader of his problem.

Before the teacher could begin the discussion, the girl sitting in front of me raised her hand, and, without waiting for the teacher to call on her, began to talk.

"I know exactly how he felt," she said, obviously troubled. "My parents expect me to become a doctor, and if I were going to fail I'd *have* to cheat."

Her remark provoked a flurry of comment, some students confirming the point, almost sadly and shamefully, as if revealing an unhappy truth about their lives; some casually amoral—"Everyone cheats," one student said, "that's the way it works"; and some almost belligerently, as if expecting the teacher to reprimand them for asserting that they would, if they thought it necessary, cheat to succeed in school. But the teacher didn't reprimand them. She tolerated the outpouring for a few brief moments and then waved the class into relative quiet and asked, "What techniques does the author use to reveal character in this story?"

The girl in front of me waved her hand this time, waited until the teacher acknowledged her, and said, "My father has warned me what medical school is going to be like, and I'm not sure I can get through it—I'm not even sure I want to be a doctor. . . ."

Which was understandable, since she was at the moment in the eighth grade. The teacher acknowledged that, replying, "Yes, Jane, well you have plenty of time to make up your mind. Now, there are three ways an author reveals character—can you tell me what they are?"

Jane slumped a bit in her seat, in a gesture that often reveals ignorance, but that in this case seemed an expression of indifference, and another student joined in: "The kid who turned him in for cheating is a character, all right—he ought to be shot. Nobody turns you in for cheating."

Another flurry of argument followed that remark, with several students agreeing but with several others objecting that there were good reasons not to tolerate cheating, even if it did mean turning in a friend. One argued that there were reasons for having rules against this kind of behavior, and others responded that no circumstances justified turning in a friend. A few of them tried to defend the concept of a code of ethics, while others spoke for unconditional loyalty among friends. They were searching for their arguments when the teacher again interrupted. Bending slightly to the path the discussion insisted, against her will, on taking, she asked, "All right, how does the author reveal the character of the student who turns P. S. in?"

The students stared blankly, apparently unable to turn their thoughts away from the moral complexities of the story toward the teacher's questions, and the room was, for the first time, silent. One child, introspectively, as if speaking to himself, muttered quietly, "I *did* cheat once, on a test, and I was scared to death, but no one turned me in."

"What techniques," the teacher repeated, sternly now, "does the author use to reveal character in this story? We've had them before, you studied

Readers must analyze and think, producing their own understandings, not simply remember information provided by teacher or textbook.

ROBERT E. PROBST

them last year, you know what they are, there are only three—now ***what are they?***"

The class was subdued.

"Well, the author can just tell you about somebody's character," one student responded.

"He can show how the character acts," said another.

And the little girl in front of me, still preoccupied with other thoughts, offered distractedly, "He can show other characters reacting to him or talking about him."

"Good," said the teacher, breathing a sigh of relief, "now let's go on. . . ."

But I forget what she went on to. She had to move on, she explained later. There were other stories to cover, other skills and techniques to learn, and a test to be taken on Friday. They had to be ready for that test. It had to do with techniques of characterization, and it was important. Those kids, that little girl, would be under a great deal of pressure to pass it, one way or another. They might even be tempted to cheat.

The Argument:

I'm sure that all of the pressures the teacher felt were real, almost as real as those her students felt and wanted to talk about, and the discussion might have served her as it might have served them; but her vision of literature and its function led her to other matters. She saw her job as the teaching of skills and terms and techniques. The students, on the other hand, wanted to address the moral dilemmas presented in the story. Their instincts and inclinations led them to talk about the intense pressure to succeed that comes to bear upon some of them, about the temptation to cheat that confronts them all, about the weight of parents' expectations, about the conflicting values of friendship and honesty, about the burdens of a demanding honor code that is supposed to be valued even above friendship. But their teacher wanted to conduct a recitation on the three techniques of characterization.

Louise Rosenblatt would argue that the students in that class had the clearer, more vital conception of literature:

> Surely, of all the arts, literature is most immediately implicated with life itself. The very medium through which the author shapes the text—language—is grounded in the shared lives of human beings. Language is the bloodstream of a common culture, a common history. What might otherwise be mere vibrations in the air or black marks on a page can point to all that has been thought or imagined—in Henry James' phrases, to "all life, all feeling, all observation, all vision."[2]

Had the teacher viewed literature that way, she might have considered the students' questions and interests more significant—they came, after all, from the life, the feeling, the observation, the vision of the students. They were focused clearly and intently on the connecting links between the text and their own lives. The story was, for them, implicated with life itself, and they wanted to consider those implications. To have done so would have been to invite the students into the literature in the most powerful and effective way, allowing it to be, not an exercise or a drill, but a shaping experience, one out of which students could make meaning. They could have, if the teacher had allowed it, participated in the making of meaning about their own lives as well as about the text, engaging in real thought rather than in simple recall of terms and definitions.

Rosenblatt has suggested some principles for that sort of teaching:[3]

> **First, the students must be free to deal with their own reactions.**

These students clearly were not free to deal with their own reactions, which were strong and clear. They were instead constrained to ignore them in favor of the teacher's exercise.

> **Second, there must be an opportunity for "an initial crystallization of a personal sense of the work."**

The personal sense of the work *was* crystallizing quickly for these students. They had begun to articulate the personal implications of the story even before the teacher was able to start her lesson, and it took some effort for her to interrupt them so that she could proceed with her work on characterization.

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[2] Louise M. Rosenblatt, "Language, Literature, and Values," in *Language, Schooling, and Society*. Edited by Stephen N. Tchudi. Upper Montclair, N.J.: Boynton Cook Publishers, 1985, p. 65. Reprinted by permission of Louise M. Rosenblatt.

[3] Louise M. Rosenblatt, *Literature as Exploration* (Fourth edition). New York: Modern Language Association, 1983, pp. 66, 69, 71, 74.

Third, the teacher should attempt to find the points of contact among the opinions of students.

These students were finding the connections easily. Some said "cheating cannot be tolerated"; others, "you can't betray your friends." They had begun to notice and discuss their different perspectives on cheating, on the honor code, on the issue of loyalty. There was great potential in that discussion, because there *was* conflict, in their lives and in the story, between two codes of behavior. An opportunity to talk about those matters would have been valuable for them.

Fourth, the teacher's influence should be "an elaboration of the vital influence inherent in literature itself."

In this incident, the teacher was working—struggling—*against* the influence inherent in the literature, rather than allowing the students to pursue it.

None of Rosenblatt's principles eliminate careful, reasoned analysis in the study of literature, but they suggest that the basis for intelligent and productive reading is the unique, individual, idiosyncratic connection between the reader and the text. Rosenblatt has demonstrated that the meaning made of a literary text depends on the reader as well as on the text itself, that meaning is the transaction between an active mind and the words on the page—it does not reside in the ink, to be ferreted out, unearthed, uncovered. Rather it is created, formed, shaped by the reader in the act of reading, and thus it is *the reader's* meaning.

That doesn't, however, condemn us to intellectual isolation. Language has both idiosyncratic and social dimensions, and meanings can, to an extent, be shared. Even widely accepted conceptions are the result of such sharing and negotiating among individuals. What we understand by such terms as *love, justice, good,* and others, is the result of our immersion in a culture that has dealt with these issues in its art and literature and law, continually refining and modifying its understandings in the light of new experiences. All of these crucial concepts have their roots in concrete human experience and emerge from continual reinvestigation of that experience—it is literature's role to present and explore those roots.

Instruction in literature should enable the readers to find the connections between their experience and the literary work. If it does so, it may enable them to use the literature, to employ it in making sense of their lives.

The Dialogue:

If we were to devise instruction consistent with Rosenblatt's principles, what shape might that instruction take? It must provide students a comfortable setting, freeing them, at least for the moment, of some of the customary burdens of classroom discourse—the obligation to prove all assertions, the shackling concern with accuracy and correctness, and the competitiveness that often rules the talk. Further, they must be invited to attend to matters that are often considered extraneous and irrelevant in classrooms—their feelings, perceptions, memories. They must be given time to articulate all of those thoughts and help in finding the links between their various reactions that will reward talk. They may need assistance in identifying the elements in the text that have contributed most powerfully to shaping their responses and help in figuring out how they have worked. And they are likely to need a great deal of assistance in learning the difficult process of talking with others. Finally, they need an opportunity to shape the discussion, directing it toward their own goals. They need to sense the influence inherent in the literary work and attempt, in the discussion and writing, to articulate it, define it, explore it.

The following activity is intended to lead students to the sort of literary experience implicit in Rosenblatt's principles and to demonstrate for them some of the potential satisfactions in beginning a consideration of a literary work with their own responses. It asks students to read a short literary work, probably a poem, although a short story—Bryan's, for instance—might work as well, and then to discuss it by responding to a series of questions designed and arranged to encourage reflection on several aspects of the act of reading.

The teacher can guide the talk gently, without interfering too much, by providing a selection from these questions—perhaps five to ten, depending on the time available and the maturity of the group—reworded suitably for the group, of course, and prepared without the side-note (the column labeled "Focus"). Placing each question to be used on a separate small page (4" x 5") stapled into a small book provides a place to jot down notes and encourages the readers to address each question more thoroughly before going on to the others. The first page of the booklet might give such instructions as those following, reworded appropriately for the group:

> Please read the text and take a moment or two to reflect on it. Then turn to the next page and begin. Take a few minutes—as much time as you need or want— with each question. Please reflect on each question for a moment or two, perhaps jotting down brief notes, before discussing it. Some may be more productive than others for you, and you may wish to give those more time. There is no rush, no need to finish them all. Please don't glance ahead in the booklet.

The discussion might be conducted in pairs, or in small groups of perhaps four or five students. Each arrangement has its virtues and its problems. In pairs, if the students are compatible, the talk may be more intimate, more personal, and more likely to lead to discoveries about the self. The small groups, however, are sometimes better able to sustain the discussion because they have more minds at work on each question. Decide how you wish to arrange the talk, give the students a copy of the text and the booklet, and explain the activity. If you've chosen a poem, you might read it aloud, and then let them begin.

The questions guiding the discussion of the text reflect a concern for the variability of readings and for the possibility of moving from response into analysis without denying the validity of students' unique personal reactions and associations. They are generic questions, tied not to a particular text but rather to a conception of the reading process. They invite students to attend to themselves, to their own experiences with the work; to identify aspects of the text that seem significant; to consider their readings in the light of other readings by other students; and, finally, to reflect on what they have observed about themselves and their classmates in the process. (See the next page for sample questions.)

After the pairs, or the groups, have finished with the booklet and reconvened, consider reactions to the activity. In particular, you might raise questions such as these:

> Do you have any first reactions to the discussion, any thoughts or observations about its results for you or for the group?
>
> Did differences in readings of the text emerge as you talked? Did those differences reveal the possibility of other legitimate experiences with the text? Did the talk lead to any insights into the text, or yourself, or others at the table?
>
> Did the discussion occasionally drive you back to the text to find examples, evidence, sources of ideas? Did you find yourselves engaging in analysis, either of the text or of your interpretations and associations?
>
> How did your understanding of the text or your feelings about it change as you talked? Do you view the text differently now that you have discussed it extensively with others?

Conclusions:

If discussion of students' experiences with a text seems productive, it should suggest that the teaching of a literary work might begin with the reader's response, whether that response is emotional, visceral, aesthetic, or intellectual. The teacher might then encourage students to examine that response, looking at themselves, the text, other readers, and other texts. That discussion might lead to several possible outcomes. Students might find that their initial impressions or interpretations are reinforced and confirmed, that they are refuted, or, most likely, that they are modified in the course of discussion and writing. This is not, however, necessarily a matter of right and wrong, of dispelling error, but rather a process of refining and clarifying. The confirmation, modification, or refutation resulting from the discussion indicates not simply that mistakes have been corrected, though of course that may have happened, but rather that there has been some growth in understanding, some change in perspective. To see the changes simply as rejection of error is to suggest once again that there is a single correct interpretation.

Questions to Help Students Focus on Significant Aspects of Their Reading

Focus	*Questions*
Introductions	Introduce yourself to your partner(s)—where you are from, what your interests are, and so on. You may ask your partner(s) any questions you wish.
First reaction	What was your first reaction or response to the text? Describe or explain it briefly.
Feelings	What feelings did the text awaken in you? What emotions did you feel as you read the text?
Perceptions	What did you see happening in the text? Paraphrase it; retell the major events briefly.
Visual images	What image was called to mind by the text? Describe it briefly.
Associations	What memory does the text call to mind—of people, places, events, sights, smells, or even of something more ambiguous, perhaps feelings or attitudes?
Thoughts, ideas	What idea or thought was suggested by the text? Explain it briefly.
Selection of textual elements	On what, in the text, did you focus most intently as you read—what word, phrase, important idea?
Judgments of what is important	What is the most important word in the text? What is the most important phrase in the text? What is the most important aspect of the text?
Identification of problems	What is the most difficult word in the text? What is there in the text or in your reading that you had the most trouble understanding?
Author	What sort of person do you imagine the author of this text to be?
Patterns of response	How did you respond to the text—emotionally or intellectually? Did you feel involved with the text or distant from it?
Other readings	How did your reading of the text differ from that of your discussion partner (or the others in your group)? In what ways were they similar?
Evolution of your reading	How did your understanding of the text or your feelings about it change as you talked?
Evaluations	Do you think the text is a good one? Why or why not?
Literary associations	Did this text call to mind any other literary work (poem, play, film, story—any genre)? If it did, what is the work and what is the connection you see between the two?
Writing	If you were asked to write about your reading of the text, on what would you focus? Would you write about some association or memory, some aspect of the text itself, something about the author, or some other matter?
Other readers	What did you observe about your discussion partner (or the others in your group) as the talk progressed?

Discussion beginning with response might then extend to biography, history, criticism, culture, or intellectual history. Beginning with the personal and unique does not necessitate a purely egocentric study that denies the validity of other lines of inquiry; it simply asserts that the fundamental literary experience is intimate, personal, and dependent on the nature of the individual. It is, in fact, quite likely that these discussions of personal readings will lead the students naturally into close analysis of the texts, and that other questions—biographical, historical, and others—will emerge as students attempt to understand and reconcile their different readings.

Not used to an approach that emphasizes working with responses to texts, students may not like it, and they may fight it. If they have learned well to play according to other rules—predicting the interests and interpretations of the teacher, for instance, or memorizing details, or whatever other pattern may prevail—they may not be happy with a sudden change in the game. Although it may seem to them, as it does to many teachers, permissive and indulgent, this sort of reading—and teaching—can be rigorous and demanding. It requires the reader to consider not just the text, but also one's self and the readings of others. Readers must analyze and think, producing their own understandings, not simply remember information provided by teacher or textbook. This exploration of responses can be fascinating or exhausting or both. It may reveal much about the individual who engages in it. It is easy to resist, however, since the teacher cannot spell out expectations precisely. There are no absolutes in such a classroom—each reader must make his or her own sense of things. The exploration of responses can be hard work, and the uncertainty may be nerve-racking; but the process has its rewards. It keeps the class alive, allowing it to be a vital exchange of ideas rather than the working out of a script.

> *Readers must analyze and think, producing their own understandings, not simply remember information provided by teacher or textbook.*
>
> ROBERT E. PROBST

If we accept the idea that literature ought to be significant, that the reader has to assimilate it and work with it, that transforming it into knowledge is more significant than memorizing the definitions of technical terms, then we need to find ways of bringing the reader and the text together and of forcing on the reader the responsibility for making meaning of the text. First efforts are very likely doomed to fail, for obvious reasons—the students aren't used to it and don't trust it; we aren't used to it and haven't figured out all of its complications; it places tremendous responsibility on everyone involved, not the teacher alone; it requires that we deal with 30 evolving poems at a time, rather than just one stable text; it requires that students accept a new and frightening notion of what knowledge is; and it demands a tolerance for ambiguity and digression. But if meaning is a human act rather than a footlocker full of dusty facts, then we need to focus attention on the act of making meaning rather than simply on the accumulation of data.

229

Practical Ideas for Reader Responses

Reader Response Logs

By Jenee Gossard

Language Arts Consultant; Former English
Department Chair, Culver City High School;
and Former Codirector, UCLA Writing Project

Of the many tools designed to improve reading comprehension, the reader's log is one of the best and one of the most economical. It is one of the best because it enhances comprehension in ways that support the continued growth of a reader. And it is truly economical in the sense that it requires little of the teacher's time outside class to set up or to follow up afterward.

Readers' logs deepen students' abilities to construct meaning from texts by encouraging students to notice their responses and to examine them for patterns and insights. A reader's log is simple to use: Whenever the reader comes to a stopping place, he or she records a response *of any sort* in the log book. These entries can serve many purposes—as stimuli for discussions, as springboards for writing and further reading, and as seeds of literary analysis. Research studies show that students who keep logs of their reading demonstrate improved comprehension.[1]

How readers' logs improve comprehension is no mystery. Research studies of the reading process have shown that what we call *reading comprehension* does not depend solely on decoding words.[2] In fact, the decoding of words accounts for less than 70 percent of comprehension. More than 70 percent of comprehension occurs in the interplay between the text and all the other matters readers carry with them—feelings, attitudes, knowledge, experience, opinions, relationships, state of health, and so on. To help students become good readers, become more and more capable of making meaning from texts, we need to teach them strategies for using all the relevant aspects of their personal experiences as they read. By keeping readers' logs, students increase comprehension by deepening a relationship between the text and their own lives.

The idea of the reader's log had interested me for some time. I was intrigued by students' responses that teachers had shared in workshops, and I was impressed by the range of students, kindergarten through college, who used the log format effectively.[3] Most of all, I was captured by the natural insights and perceptions of even very young children when they were encouraged to bring their own experiences to the process of making meaning from a text. On the basis of all I had read and heard, I decided to try the technique with my own classes.

Getting Started with Readers' Logs

At the time I began using readers' logs in my high school classroom, I was still under the delusion that *telling is teaching,* so I *told* my students exactly what to do. I told them to bring a small spiral notebook to class each day with their reading textbooks. I told them to write a response after each reading session in any way they liked; that is, spelling, sentence structure, and grammar didn't count. I *told* them that their responses might include feelings, images, ideas, questions, and so on. Finally, I *told* them to write in their logs every day in class and at least three times a week at home. Did they have any questions? Yes, two: "How long should it be?" and "What are we supposed to write?" Patiently, I told them again that there was no set format, no "right answers," and no way to do it wrong except not to do it at all.

After I had *told* my students everything they needed to know, they began using their logs in class. At the end of the week, I took home a few logs from each class to enjoy the candid, perceptive, and insightful responses I believed would appear on every page.

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[1] See Nancie Atwell, *In the Middle: Writing, Reading, and Learning with Adolescents.* Portsmouth, N.H.: Boynton Cook Publishers, Inc., 1987, and Sondra Perl and Nancy Wilson, *Through Teachers' Eyes: Portraits of Writing Teachers at Work.* Portsmouth, N.H.: Heinemann Educational Books, Inc., 1986.

[2] Yetta M. Goodman and Carolyn L. Burke, *Reading Strategies: Focus on Comprehension.* Katonah, N.Y.: Richard C. Owen Publishers, Inc., 1980.

[3] *The Journal Book.* Edited by Toby Fulwiler. Portsmouth, N.H.: Boynton Cook Publishers, Inc., 1987.

As you probably guessed, I was keenly disappointed by the responses I read. Students in my honors class, for example, offered cautious, inhibited responses: "The protagonist is interesting, the foreshadowing is good, and I liked the symbolism too." From another sort of class, I got different but equally disappointing responses: "Boring." "Stupid."

This experience forced me finally to accept the idea that telling *isn't* teaching. It was clear that if I wanted responses that were spontaneous, candid, and *perceptive* responses, I would have to *demonstrate* the use of readers' logs.

Using Metacognition and Response

At first I thought I needed to teach my students *how to respond* to their reading. But I quickly realized that was not the problem at all. The human mind responds automatically, incessantly; unless it goes dead while reading, the human mind *cannot be prevented from responding*. What my students needed to learn was that their personal responses were valid, appropriate, and useful. To track these, I ask the students to practice a metacognitive exercise: noticing and recording their responses while they are reading.

To demonstrate metacognition, I begin by talking with my students about the kinds of responses readers often notice, giving examples from books or movies that they are familiar with:

Common Responses from Readers

Feelings (boring, sad, exciting, weird)
Questions (I wonder why the author put in the boring parts?)
Images (pictures in the mind, with full sensory response)
Favorite (or detested) words and phrases
Echoes (of other books, movies, television shows, headlines, songs, or poems)
Reactions to characters or events ("That Templeton is such a rat! Ha, ha.")
Memories (people, events, places you've known)
Connections (to other ideas, people, feelings, books)
And there are many more possibilities

After discussing the common responses with my students, I ask them to practice metacognition by noticing their own responses as I read a short passage aloud. When I stop reading, I give them about 45 seconds to write down their responses. Then I read a bit more from the work, asking the students again to notice their mind's activities and write their responses down when I finish reading.

Sharing in Pairs

After the two readings, I ask the students to share their responses, first with a partner and then with the whole class. The pair-sharing period is short: only a minute and a half. The procedure is simple: the first person reads his or her responses aloud to a partner, *without elaboration or discussion*, as the listening partner metacognitively considers how these responses are like his or her own and how they are different. As soon as the first partner has finished sharing, the second partner shares his or her responses, *also unelaborated*, while the first partner considers how the responses are similar to or different from his or her own. After both partners have shared their responses, they use the remaining time to discuss whatever they noticed—similarities, differences, new responses, and so on.

Sharing with the Whole Class

To begin the whole-class discussion, I ask how many pairs had *similar* responses. As they describe the shared responses, I write them on a large chart on the chalkboard in a column headed "Similarities." I start with similarities because students are often more confident volunteering an idea if their partners had also thought of it. When a student contributes an idea, I repeat it, sometimes asking a question to make sure I've understood the idea, and note it on the chart in an abbreviated form.

Because one of my goals is to build confidence, I take a deliberately positive attitude to my students' ideas: no response is wrong or weird; all are equally interesting *as responses*. Factual mistakes are treated matter-of-factly and corrected on the spot: "Wasn't it the *mother* who sent the letter, not the aunt?"

I continue encouraging my students to offer responses until they begin to share some risky ones. If I have done a good job of reducing anxiety, eventually someone will admit thinking that he and his partner found the reading "a little boring." Or someone will ask, plaintively, "Is this one of those books where the dog dies?" or "Do we have to read another 'girl' book?" On the chart I write, "boring," "dog dies?" "girl book?" in the same accepting manner as the safer, more conventional responses.

After collecting as many similarities as I can extract, I make a column headed "Differences" and write responses that partners did not share. Here again, I press until some of the responses suggest a willingness to take risks: "I didn't like the long descriptions"; "I just zoned out and started thinking about the prom"; "My partner hated the part about the frog." All responses, no matter how divergent, are recorded.

When the whole class shares responses, I listen especially for five kinds: images, questions, words and phrases (favorite or detested), feelings, and echoes. I find these particularly useful because they are among the most common responses and also because they are most likely to lead to more in-depth discussions later. I do not specifically request those types of responses, but after writing a number of different responses on the chart, I begin to comment on them. For example, if several questions or images have come up, I may ask if anyone else has a question or image that we could add. I might do the same for feelings, echoes, and words and phrases from the text as several of those responses begin to emerge.

Whole-class sharing and pair sharing serve three important purposes. Primarily, they serve to validate and celebrate the students' responses, letting students know that I am unconditionally interested in their ideas and reactions. The sharing reinforces the point *that there is no way to do a reader's log wrong except not to do it at all.* As a teacher what I find most delightful is that from the wildly divergent responses listed on the board, a network of relationships among images, ideas, and feelings begins to emerge quite naturally. Key ideas and themes that I can use to lead students to deeper levels of understanding appear as if by magic. But the most freeing aspect of the group's sharing is the validation of personal response.

A second purpose for sharing in pairs and with the whole group is that these discussions fill in gaps in the reading. Even the best readers miss things as they read, and some students miss three to five words out of every ten. The shared discussions help to remind all students of the content of the reading and to repair gaps in their memory or processing.

A third, (minor) purpose for collecting students' responses visibly and publicly on the chart is that I can model a note-making process. Responses in the logs need not be full sentences with correct spelling and punctuation. My notes on the chart are fragmentary and abbreviated, full of arrows, circles, and other shorthand symbols representing the students' ideas. Students observe the advantages of capturing the essence of ideas in ways that enable them to extract the longer, more complex version later.

Seeing Possibilities with Readers' Logs

The first time I demonstrated a reader's log in class, I was encouraged by the students' high level of engagement in the sharing sessions. The sharings in pairs were animated and noisy—a good sign, I have found—and the students didn't want to stop when the short sharing time was up. During the sharing that took place with the whole class, the students were eager to contribute their ideas and reactions and, again, they didn't want to stop. At this point I figured I had done a pretty good job of teaching them what *response* could mean, and now they should be able to do it *on their own.* I had no intention of spending any more class time looking at readers' logs.

However, the next day, one of my teach-me-if-you-dare students looked in before class and asked whether we were going to do "that book thing" again today. When I shook my head, he looked disappointed, an unexpected response from a student who normally hated *anything* we did in class. But as I thought about it further, I caught a clue: *I* had enjoyed the reader's log demonstration, and apparently *they* had enjoyed it, too. And we had all learned a lot about the book I'd used in the demonstration. Why not do it again? What I had written off as a one-time demonstration turned out to be a highly successful teaching strategy that I began to use once or twice a week in every class.

Sharing Reflections

Readers' logs also gave me a new strategy for organizing discussion groups. At the end of each week, I ask the students to review the responses in their logs and then write a reflection entry for eight to ten minutes in which they might:

- Expand a response.
- Relate an idea or image to their own lives.
- Recall a memory.
- Explore a new idea.
- Play around with an idea or structure.

After writing, they form groups of four or five, with a "designated starter" in each group. The designated starter opens by reading her or his reflection to the group; each group member does the same. The group does not discuss or react to any reflection until all of the reflections have been read aloud. While listening to each reflection, group members ask themselves:

- How is it like mine?
- How is it different?
- What do I like about it?

After hearing all the reflections, group members discuss whatever they noticed about the set. A group recorder keeps track of ideas and issues as they arise. At the end of the discussion time (five to ten minutes), I ask a spokesperson from each group to tell the whole class about what the group discussed. The speakers might tell us about common themes that emerged in the groups' reflections, the most interesting ideas that came up, or an issue that the members disagreed about. If there was a reflection in the group that everyone might enjoy hearing, the spokesperson might share that. This activity produces a rich mixture of ideas and reactions and again leads to increased comprehension and insight.

I learned to follow Nancie Atwell's practice of sitting in on each group for a few minutes—not to check up on the members but to hear what they have to say. Like her I found that a low, primary-grade chair—one that puts me just a little below the group's eye level—works best. At that level, they know I am *listening* to them. Of course, sometimes when I sit in on a group, the person to my left finishes reading, and it is *my turn* to share. But that is all right because while they were writing their eight- to ten-minute reflections, I was writing one, too. And when I share mine, they take in my ideas as they do each other's—not as the "right answer" but as simply another point of view.

Grading Readers' Logs

One reservation teachers have about using readers' logs is the fear that at grading time they will be crushed under the paper load: "I don't even have time to *read* all that writing, let alone correct and grade it!" Take heart. One of the nicest aspects of readers' logs is that the teacher does not need to read, correct, or grade each one. For grading purposes, log entries are either done or not done; *what* they write is secondary. Since I allot time in class each day for reader response, I can easily spot those who typically write in their logs and those who do not. I actually do read individual log entries on a fairly regular basis, but I do so for my own delight or to find a particularly perceptive idea to share with the class, *not to grade them.*

There is also no need to correct logs. Since log entries simply record a student's reactions while reading, there is no correct or incorrect response. Misunderstandings or highly idiosyncratic interpretations are often cleared up or shifted during the sharing sessions as students articulate, modify, and deepen their own responses. During the sharing in the whole group, I can easily help to clarify the major issues or confusions produced by the reading. Sitting in on discussion groups also helps me know which issues are important or meaningful to the students—and which ones I may want to address in later lessons.

At first students demanded points for their logs. I chose the simplest approach: At grading time I had the students count the total number of responses and reflections they had written. I made a curve roughly based on the number of days we read in class (usually every day) plus the times I had asked them to read at home (about three per week). If my total was 60 entries, then I might say that 50–60 entries = an *A* on readers' logs; 35–49 = *B*; and so on. After a while, however, grades ceased to be an issue. Most students enjoyed responding, found their logs useful for many purposes, and no longer worried about getting points for writing entries.

Engaging Students with Literature

As a teacher I find that having students keep readers' logs is an effective and particularly satisfying way of engaging them with literature.

The sharing of their divergent, idiosyncratic responses inevitably reveals patterns, relationships, and new understandings. Almost every element of literary analysis I might ever want to teach emerges quite naturally in the discussion of responses. And the students discover that the exploration of literature can be a shared enterprise, one in which the teacher is not only learning along with them but also often from them.

Using Other Sources to Introduce Readers' Logs

Passages from the opening pages or later sections of the following books make excellent selections for introducing the idea of a reader's log. The grade levels in parentheses indicate the lowest levels at which other teachers or I have used the work for reader-response practice.

Anaya, Rudolfo A. *Bless Me, Ultima*. Berkeley: Tonatiuh-Quinto Sol International, 1992. (seventh grade and above)

Baker, Russell. *Growing Up*. New York: New American Library, 1992. (ninth grade and above)

Banks, Lynne Reid. *The Indian in the Cupboard*. New York: Avon, 1982. (fifth grade and above)

Carter, Forrest. *The Education of Little Tree*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico, 1986. (sixth grade and above)

Cisneros, Sandra. *The House on Mango Street*. New York: Vintage, 1989. (fourth grade and above)

Dillard, Annie. *An American Childhood*. New York: HarperCollins, 1988. (seventh grade and above)

Markham, Beryl. *West with the Night*. Berkeley: North Point, 1983. (tenth grade and above)

Maruki, Toshi. *Hiroshima No Pika*. New York: Lothrop, Lee & Shepard, 1980. (fourth grade and above)

Mukherjee, Bharati. *Jasmine*. New York: Fawcett Crest, 1990. (tenth grade and above)

O'Brien, Tim. *The Things They Carried*. New York: Penguin, 1991. (tenth grade and above)

Paterson, Katherine. *The Great Gilly Hopkins*. New York: HarperCollins, 1987. (fifth grade and above)

Paterson, Katherine. *The Master Puppeteer*. New York: HarperCollins, 1989. (sixth grade and above)

Strategies for Interacting with a Text

By Carol Booth Olson

Director, UCI Writing Project

When I first began teaching literature as a graduate student at UCLA, I thought that it was my job to guide students toward an "accepted" interpretation of each text. So, with yellow highlighter in hand, I went through each line or page of a poem, story, play, or novel, carefully framing questions that would enable us all to arrive at a reading predetermined by my previous experience with the text, the readings of my professors culled from old class notes, and the insights of literary critics. I will even admit to occasionally taking a look at that old standby, *Cliffs Notes*, for an annotation of some obscure textual reference or for a second opinion on an interpretation that I myself felt rather uncertain about. I did a lot of fishing in those days—fishing for the right answers to what were sometimes ill-framed questions. When the class didn't bite, I would often just answer the question myself so that we could move on. As it was to the teacher in Robert Probst's story at the beginning of this section, moving on was very important to me at the time, although I can't recall precisely why. It was often, although not always, a laborious journey. But, as I think back, the journey may have been more laborious for me than for my students. After all, I was the one who was painstakingly trudging through each text, giving the guided tour, as it were.

Since I have been exposed to all of the wonderful strategies shared in the UCI Writing Project, I am much more willing and better able to let students embark on their own journeys through texts and arrive at diverse destinations. I say much more willing because people like Bob Probst, Sheridan Blau, Dan Kirby, and Ann Berthoff have helped me to redefine learning and literacy and to respect and acknowledge the power of students' responses. I feel better able because the innovative ideas of Gabriele Rico, Jenee Gossard, Rebekah Caplan, my UCI Writing Project colleagues, and others have expanded my repertoire of strategies beyond the traditional question-answer approach so that I can help facilitate my students' interactions with texts.

Provided below are just a few strategies for interacting with a text. Although some of these strategies were originally popularized to facilitate the writing process, teachers have naturally and easily adapted them to enhance the reading process as well. To illustrate that these strategies are applicable at all grade levels, I have included examples from a wide range of literary works.

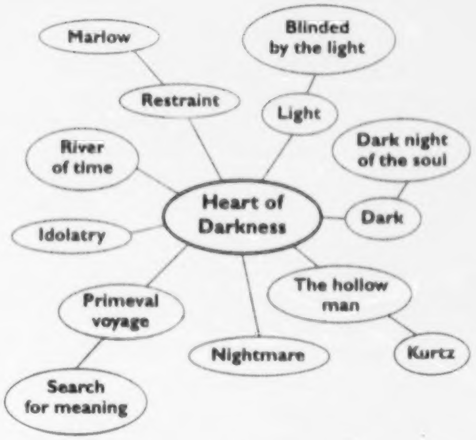
Clustering—A Prewriting Strategy

As Gabriele Rico says, "Clustering is a nonlinear brainstorming activity that generates ideas, images, and feelings around a stimulus word until a pattern becomes discernible." As students produce a cluster of words around a stimulus word, the encircled words rapidly radiate outward until a sudden shift takes place, a sort of Aha! that signals a sudden awareness of the tentative whole that allows students to begin writing. Clustering, which was once an exciting Aha! in and of itself, is now an essential and frequently used prewriting strategy for teachers and students alike. But it also is a stimulating idea-generating strategy for thinking, talking, and writing about literature—before, during, and after the reading process.

Clustering and free-writing about a book title, as in Figure 1, can surface important themes, issues, questions, and feelings about the text. Clustering characters, setting, events, and symbols can offer students a chance to take a closer and deeper look at a text and to experience some of their own cries of Aha!

Dialectical Journal

As described by Ann Berthoff, the dialectical journal is a double-entry note-taking/note-making process the student can keep while reading literature. It provides the student with two columns that are in dialogue with one another, not only encouraging cognitive responses such as analysis, interpretation, and reflective questioning but also eliciting affective reactions as well. "The reason for the double-entry format," says Berthoff, "is that it provides a way for the student to conduct the continual 'audit of meaning' that is at the heart of learning to read and write critically."[1] Figure 2 demonstrates that process with student-selected entries for John Updike's short story "A & P" from Sheila Koff's article "What the Text Says—What the Text Means to Me . . . ," included in the "Critical Thinking and Writing" section of *Practical Ideas*.



Travel back through time into the heart of darkness. See the naked soul of man. Walk to the edge of the precipice. Look over. Look deep within yourself. Does something within you resonate when you hear the primitive voices calling . . . beckoning? Can you accept that? In the land of light and shadow, is there black and white or only gray? Reality fades as you travel further and further into the recesses of the unconscious.

Figure 1. Clustering and Free-writing on *Heart of Darkness*

Found Poetry

One way to help students examine the language of a work of literature is to ask them to translate what they read into another genre. According to Susan Starbuck, many pieces of good prose are actually "poems" waiting to be "discovered."[2] In found poetry students are asked to "find" a poem that is embedded in a piece of professional or student prose. Freed from the constraints of creating the content, students can play with the words and format on the page and rearrange the images that resonate for them. As Starbuck says in the handout she compiled for teacher-training workshops, "The result is a new insider's feeling for poetry as you talk about the poetic choices you make and the serendipity you experience as organic forms emerge from the words themselves."

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[1] See Ann Berthoff, *The Making of Meaning: Metaphors, Models and Maxims for Writing Teachers*. Upper Montclair, N.J.: Boynton Cook Publishers, 1981.

[2] *AUTHOR'S NOTE:* Although Susan has popularized found poetry among Writing Project teachers in our area, we were introduced to the concept by Marian M. Mohr, a teacher/consultant from the Northern Virginia Writing Project and author of *Revision: The Rhythm of Meaning*. Upper Montclair, N.J.: Boynton Cook Publishers, Inc., 1984.

Starbuck suggests that teachers model the process before asking the students to work on their own. You may find her guidelines (also from the handout) helpful:

- Select a piece of prose that you particularly like. It should contain several strong images and some parallel structures. A passage with several prepositions works especially well. (For your students' first experience, select a passage from a work they are reading or with which they are familiar.)
- Underline the words and images that are the strongest for you, that are emotionally charged or the most essential to the feeling of the passage.

Note Taking (Facts)	Note Making (Feelings and Responses)
"I stood there with my hand on a box of HiHo crackers trying to remember if I rang it up or not." (p. 187)[3]	The sight of the three bathing-suited girls is *enough* to make Sammy lose his concentration?!
"I know it made her day to trip me up." (p. 187)	Negative attitude! He thinks everybody is out to get him?
"Not this queen." (p. 188)	He's singled out one girl—placed her a pedestal by calling her Queenie. He places her on a pedestal from appearance alone.
"The sheep pushing their carts down the aisle . . ." (p. 190)	What makes him refer to people as sheep? Is he bored with people, seeing them day after day shopping? Is he mad at them?
"I bet you could set off dynamite in an A & P and all the people would by and large keep reaching and checking oatmeal off their lists . . ."(p. 190)	He sees the A & P as a real boring place, boring people making a statement that a bomb wouldn't wake them up.
"Stokesie's married with two babies chalked up on his fuselage already . . ." (p. 190)	Sammy sees Stoksie as already tied up, in this town, this job, this life. He's already caught.
". . . he thinks he's going to be manager some sunny day . . ." (p. 190)	Is Sammy jealous? Or does he know that Stoksie will never make manager in this place? That nothing happens in this job.

Fig. 2. Dialectical Journal for John Updike's "A & P"[3]

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[3] Page references are to John Updike, *Pigeon Feathers and Other Stories*. Copyright 1962. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc. Reprinted by permission of the publisher.

- Now begin to play with these words and images. Find a satisfying order for them. For example:
  - Use the lines for emphasis. Separate the images so that you have one strong image per line.
  - Place the words that you think are the most important at the ends of the lines.
  - Set off powerful single words on lines by themselves.
  - Indent lines that give details for other lines.
  - Make a "picture" on the page for the eye to follow as it reads the meaning.
  - Use whatever parallel constructions you find in parallel forms in your poem. For instance, start all your lines with prepositions, *-ing* words, or infinitives.
- Allow yourself to add new words or to change the words if they seem cumbersome or if a new idea begins to emerge for you. Your poem may begin to have a life of its own, separate from the initial intention of the text's author. Let the poem set itself free. Letting go is an important aspect of writing poetry—as is the continuous process you will find yourself engaged in as you begin playing with form.

Figure 3 illustrates a poem I found in Edgar Allen Poe's tale "Ligeia."

Although I have never experimented with having students transform poems into other genres, it seems to me that the found poem process would work equally well in the reverse. Consider, for example, asking students, after reading Edward Arlington Robinson's poem "Richard Cory," to write a dialogue between two townspeople who heard the news of Richard Cory's suicide. Or, after reading Alfred Lord Tennyson's poem "Mariana," ask the students to draw the setting and to write a sensory / descriptive prose passage describing the exterior and interior / psychological landscapes in the poem. In all instances students must think critically about what they read and make what they read their own by casting the language in another form.

Found Poetry in "Ligeia"

A Tale by Edgar Allen Poe

There is one dear topic however, on which my memory fails me not. It is the *person* of Ligeia. In *stature* she was tall, somewhat slender, and, in her latter days, even emaciated. I would in vain attempt to portray the majesty, the quiet ease of her demeanor, or the incomprehensible lightness and elasticity of her footfall. She came and departed as a shadow. I was never made aware of her entrance into my closed study save by the dear music of her low sweet voice, as she placed her marble hand upon my shoulder. In beauty of face no maiden ever equalled her. It was the radiance of an opium dream—an airy and spirit-lifting vision more vividly divine than the phantasies which hovered about the slumbering souls of the daughters of Delos. Yet her features were not of that regular mould which we have been falsely taught to worship in the classical labors of the heathen. "There is no exquisite beauty," says Bacon, Lord Verulam, speaking truly of all the forms and *genera* of beauty, "without some *strangeness* in the proportion."[4]

Found Poem

Ligeia

You strange, exquisite beauty
You came and departed
As a shadow
Wildly divine, spirit-lifting
You shimmered in the radiance of an opium
  dream
Ligeia
He worshipped you
You placed your marble hand
Upon his heart
Awakened his slumbering soul
Became his dear topic
His work of art
Frozen in his memory
An emaciated statue

Fig. 3. Found Poetry

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[4] Edgar Allen Poe, "Ligeia," in *The Illustrated Tales of Edgar Allen Poe*. New York: Drake Publishers, Inc, 1975, p. 141.

Guided Imagery—Drawing Mental Images

Guided imagery enables students to tap their creative imaginations and visual thinking skills. While the teacher slowly describes a setting or narrates a story using vivid sensory detail to elicit impressions or images, the students watch the "movie screens" in their minds—using visualization to develop their own mental pictures of the words they are hearing. While most guided imagery exercises are written by teachers or other professionals and are expressly designed to evoke certain impressions, literature is a rich and often untapped source for visualization. One might say that all literature is a form of guided imagery. However, as Dan Fader, a professor of English at the University of Michigan, pointed out at a talk at the University of California, Irvine, many of today's students, conditioned by the pictures already manufactured for them by the television industry, often have difficulty creating their own mental pictures to accompany the text they are reading. Ongoing practice in visualizing vivid passages from works of literature, such as the one below from *The Velveteen Rabbit*, can help to free the imagination and make literature come alive.

> And while the Boy was asleep, dreaming of the seaside, the little Rabbit lay among the old picture-books in the corner behind the fowl-house, and he felt very lonely. . . . He thought of those long sunlit hours in the garden—how happy they were—and a great sadness came over him. He seemed to see them all pass before him, each more beautiful than the other, the fairy huts in the flower bed, the quiet evenings in the wood when he lay in the bracken and the little ants ran over his paws; the wonderful day when he first knew that he was Real. He thought of the Skin Horse, so wise and gentle, and all that he had told him. Of what use was it to be loved and lose one's beauty and become Real if it all ended like this? And a tear, a real tear, trickled down his little shabby velvet nose and fell to the ground.
>
> And then a strange thing happened. For where the tear had fallen a flower grew out of the ground, a mysterious flower, not at all like any that grew in the garden. It had slender green leaves the colour of emeralds, and in the centre of the leaves a blossom like a golden cup. It was so beautiful that the little Rabbit forgot to cry, and just lay there watching it. And presently the blossom opened, and out of it there stepped a fairy.
>
> She was quite the loveliest fairy in the whole world. Her dress was of pearl and dewdrops, and there were flowers round her neck and in her hair, and her face was like the most perfect flower of all. And she came close to the little Rabbit and gathered him up in her arms and kissed him on his velveteen nose that was all damp from crying.[5]

Moreover, asking students to respond to a guided imagery experience by drawing what they saw, as in Figure 4, will often surface important images which can be discussed.

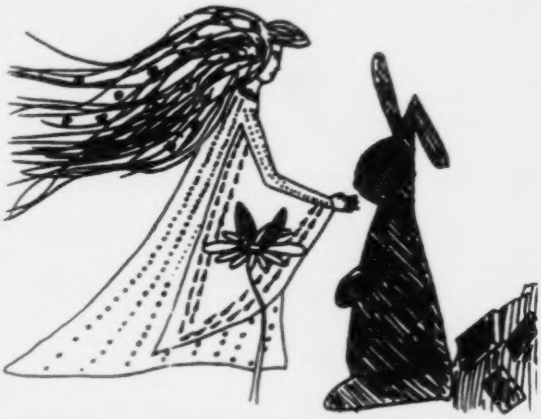

Fig. 4. A Student's Image of the Velveteen Rabbit

Reader's Theatre—Dramatizing a Text

Reader's Theatre is a way of dramatically rendering a text as if it were a play, thus bringing it to life in the classroom. The text can be scripted for the students, as shown in the example for "A Game of Catch" on the next page, or students can choose the roles and write out the lines themselves. The same passage can be "performed" by more than one group of students, allowing the class to see and hear different groups interpret the lines as they are

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[5] Margery Williams, *The Velveteen Rabbit*. New York: Henry Holt, 1983, pp. 22–26. Audiotape and videotape adaptations of *The Velveteen Rabbit* have recently been produced (New York: Alfred A. Knopf Publishers, 1985). The audiotape, with Meryl Streep's narration and George Winston's music, is especially effective for the guided imagery exercise.

A Game of Catch

by Richard Wilbur

Readers

ON:	Omniscient Narrator
G:	Glennie
GN:	Glennie's Narrator
S:	Scho
SN:	Scho's Narrator
M:	Monk
MN:	Monk's Narrator

ON: Monk and Glennie were playing catch on the side lawn of the firehouse when Scho caught sight of them. They were good at it, for seventh-graders, as anyone could see right away. Monk, wearing a catcher's mitt, would lean easily sidewise and back, with one leg lifted and his throwing hand almost down to the grass, and then lob the white ball straight up into the sunlight. Glennie would shield his eyes with his left hand and, just as the ball fell past him, snag it with a little dart of his glove. Then he would burn the ball straight toward Monk, and it would spank into the round mitt and sit, like a still-life apple on a plate, until Monk flipped it over into his right hand and, with a negligent flick of his hanging arm, gave Glennie a fast grounder.

They were going on and on like that, in a kind of slow, mannered, luxurious dance in the sun, their faces perfectly blank and entranced, when Glennie noticed Scho dawdling along the other side of the street and called hello to him. Scho crossed over and stood at the front edge of the lawn, near an apple tree, watching.

G: "Got your glove?"

GN: asked Glennie after a time. Scho obviously hadn't.

S: "You could give me some easy grounders."

SN: said Scho.

S: "But don't burn 'em."

G: "All right,"

GN: Glennie said. He moved off a little, so the three of them formed a triangle, and they passed the ball around for about five minutes, Monk tossing easy grounders to Scho, Scho throwing to Glennie, and Glennie burning them in to Monk. After a while, Monk began to throw them back to Glennie once or twice before he let Scho have his grounder, and finally Monk gave Scho a fast, bumpy grounder that hopped over his shoulder and went into the brake on the other side of the street.

S: "Not so hard,"

SN: called Scho as he ran across to get it.

M: "You should've had it,"

MN: Monk shouted.

From J. Simpson's Reader's Theatre adaptation, University of California at Irvine Writing Project.

Excerpt from *A Game of Catch*. Copyright 1994 by Richard Wilbur. Reprinted by permission of Harcourt Brace & Company. Originally appeared in *The New Yorker*.

read with more or less feeling, delivered in different tones of voice, accompanied by different body language, and so forth.

Showing, Not Telling—Painting Pictures

Like clustering, the concept of showing, not telling, is well known to most teachers. As Rebekah Caplan explains elsewhere in *Practical Ideas*, the assumption behind the showing, not telling, technique is that most students have not been trained to show what they mean. Showing, not telling, encourages students to dramatize their writing by *showing* with specific details that paint pictures for the reader. It involves giving students a *telling sentence*, such as "The room was vacant" or "The lunch period was too short," and asking them to expand the thought in that sentence into an entire paragraph. Students are challenged not to use the original statement in the paragraph at all. Rather, they must show that *the room was vacant* without making that claim directly. Giving students telling sentences about plot, setting, characters, and symbols in works of literature is a great way to prompt them to reflect on and interact with the text, as shown in Figure 5. Asking cooperative learning groups to generate their own telling sentences about a work of literature for another group to show is also an excellent way to help students discover and discuss literature. The following example is based on *Of Mice and Men* by John Steinbeck.

TELLING SENTENCE

"Lennie's mind is not right."

SHOWING PARAGRAPH

Towering over all like a giant, ignorant of his strength, Lennie crushes the life out of the objects of his affection like so many paper dolls. And then he looks at George, helplessly, questioningly, burning with shame because he has done another bad thing and terrified that there will be no more soft, fuzzy creatures to fondle. He's kind of like those puppies he smothers with love—filled with need, anxious to please, obedient to his master. George just shakes his head and wonders what's to become of them. "Tell me again about the rabbits!" The broken record is stuck on the same groove. Lennie smiles dreamily as the nightmare unfolds—oblivious to all but the pretty picture in his head.

Fig. 5. Telling Sentence

Time Line—Creating a Graphic Sequence of Events

A time line is a graphic representation of a sequence of events or activities. In the study of literature, developing time lines often helps students to reconstruct and reflect on what happens in the text. I got the idea from Joni Chancer, a teacher/consultant from the South Coast Writing Project (University of California, Santa Barbara). She suggests that students write above the time line events that they interpret to be positive (+) and write below the time line events that they feel are more negative or problematic (–). The example shown in Figure 6 is based on "The Moon Lady," a chapter in Amy Tan's novel *The Joy Luck Club*. This task elicits a great deal of animated discussion and sends students back to the text as they discuss their varied interpretations of events. Students may also wish to illustrate their time lines with pictures and symbols.

Venn Diagram—Comparing Relationships

Venn diagrams are overlapping circles often used in mathematics to show relationships between sets. In language arts instruction, Venn diagrams are useful for examining similarities and differences. In responding to literature, students find that Venn diagrams can be especially helpful for comparing and contrasting characters, themes, and settings. For example, see Figure 7 for a comparison of Roger and Mrs. Louella Bates Washington Jones in Langston Hughes's short story "Thank You, Ma'am."

Creating Venn diagrams can help students understand not only the similarities and differences between characters but also the nature of their relationships. Characters who, at first glance, seem to be polar opposites may actually be seen to have more in common when they are explored in this manner, and relationships that appear to be "give" on one side and "take" on the other may be viewed as more balanced.

These are just a few of the strategies students might use to interact with a text. The components of that interaction can be one student and a text; student partners and a text; small groups and a text; any of the aforementioned student groups, a text, and a teacher facilitating a large-group discussion; and so forth. I would suggest using these strategies sparingly and allowing enough time for the students to discuss their responses fully. As Bob Probst says, if one of our goals is to help students "make their own sense of texts," we must "give students time to articulate their thoughts and help in finding the links between their reactions." I have had

> *I no longer lead the guided tour through the text. My students' own responses lead the way.*
>
> CAROL BOOTH OLSON

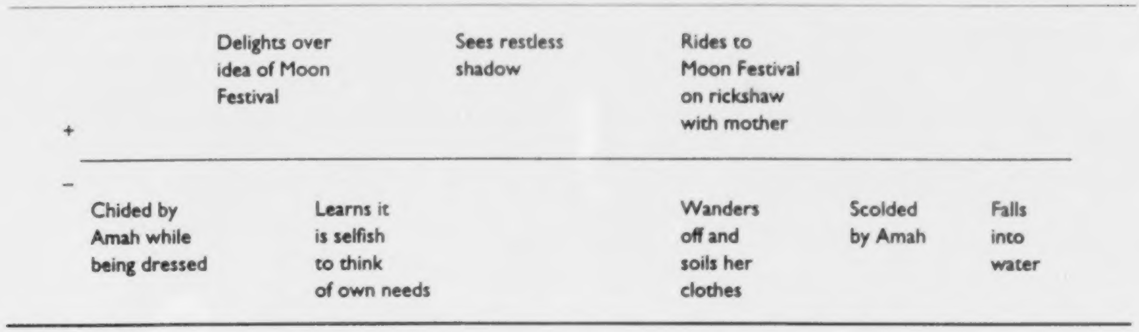
Delights over idea of Moon Festival
Sees restless shadow
Rides to Moon Festival on rickshaw with mother
+
–
Chided by Amah while being dressed
Learns it is selfish to think of own needs
Wanders off and soils her clothes
Scolded by Amah
Falls into water

Fig. 6. Time Line

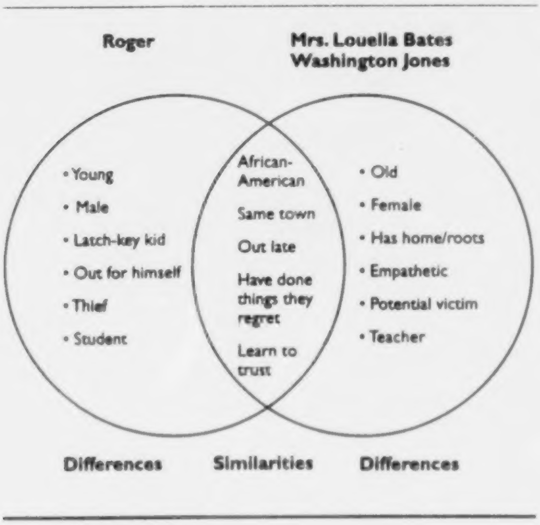
Roger
Mrs. Louella Bates Washington Jones
• Young
• Male
• Latch-key kid
• Out for himself
• Thief
• Student
African-American
Same town
Out late
Have done things they regret
Learn to trust
• Old
• Female
• Has home/roots
• Empathetic
• Potential victim
• Teacher
Differences
Similarities
Differences

Fig. 7. Venn Diagram

success with either assigning small groups a strategy or allowing each group to choose the technique that most interests its members and then giving each group an opportunity to share reflections with the whole class.

Letting Go of Leading the Guided Tour Through Literature

As Dan Kirby has noted elsewhere in *Practical Ideas*, "Reforming your teaching to nurture thinking involves more than dreaming up new activities or offering students more decision-making freedom. . . . This new view of knowledge does not mean you have nothing to teach students or that textbooks are no longer important or that old knowledge is no longer valuable. What it does mean is that teachers must plan for and structure their classes in ways that give students many opportunities to construct their own versions of knowledge in . . . more personal ways." And allowing students to construct their own versions of knowledge in more personal ways means that you, as a teacher, have to allow students to embark on their own journeys through texts and possibly arrive at destinations that may be unfamiliar to you.

As I watch students interacting with the literature and with each other, I find their own fresh questions and concerns replacing my prepackaged ones. I no longer lead the guided tour through the text. My students' own responses lead the way.

Demystifying the Essay: The Reader's Response to Nonfiction

By Laura Stokes
Former Director, Area III Writing Project,
University of California, Davis

Most of my colleagues who use reader-response approaches in teaching literature do so almost exclusively with fiction and poetry. Recently, I have begun to experiment with this approach in teaching nonfiction, including propositional essays, in my university writing courses. The methods I've been using are simple, and I believe they are working for my students.

My university students have had very little experience in reading essays, and they do not enjoy them. They describe essays as "boring" and "dry"—strictly school reading. When I asked them how they read such assigned reading, they said things like this:

> I may think about it for a short time, but most likely, I just wait until the next lecture and see if the professor explains it.
>
> I look for "things" that I think I could be tested upon, etc.
>
> When I need to read a book for a class, the teacher has picked the book because it has umpteen hidden meanings in it for us to figure out. That's what usually makes English classes so boring.

Though the responses did not surprise me, they dismayed me. These are successful students in a university, but they lack confidence as readers. They seem to perceive a text as a kind of castle, with magic concealed behind locked doors. Professors—the high priests of language—place students in dark passageways, watch them grope in the dark, and finally give them the keys to the locked doors. Essays seem to be an especially forbidding kind of text, so serious and logical, with one immutable meaning (the "main point" or "thesis") to be searched out, extracted, and summarized. No wonder so many students hate reading and fear essays.

I see the reader-response method as a way of putting the keys to the castle into the hands of my students, changing their views of reading and of texts—including essays.

At the beginning of the quarter, as a kind of training run, I ask my students to read in class a very short essay, one we can work through in a class period. Typically, I use "The Iguana," a self-contained excerpt from Isak Dinesen's *Out of Africa* (in the section titled "From an Immigrant's Notebook") in which the author's reflection on a series of incidents teaches her a lesson about being an immigrant in another's land. The essay, though short, is rich in figurative language and evocative detail, and it is relatively accessible, though not simple.

I ask my students to read the essay in class, marking words or passages that catch their attention for some reason. When they finish, they immediately write in their notebooks for ten minutes nonstop. Then, I ask them to respond, in writing, to one of the following prompts, which I have written on the chalkboard:

- What does this essay make you think about (or remind you of)?
- Choose a passage you marked and write about it.
- Write about the essay in any way that you want.

At first they are a little suspicious, wondering what I expect. Reassured that they will not be graded on this exercise and that whatever they say is all right, they begin. Here are opening sentences from several notebook entries about "The Iguana" written last quarter:

> It makes me think about greed. A lot of times people only want something because somebody else has it. Then they find out having it is no big deal to them anyway. It makes me think about how people don't look for alternatives and how they take the easy way.

> The first thing that came into my head while reading "The Iguana" is a fishing trip in the High Sierra with my uncle and his father-in-law. We went fishing for Golden trout, which is considered a fisherman's dream.

> I really liked the first paragraph. I could picture the Iguana sunning itself on a stone.

> Reading about the Iguana reminded me of the days when our family used to go camping in the desert. Especially the times when I would go out hunting with my BB gun.

Before I was aware of the power of the reader-response approach, I might have been uneasy about the writers who talked about their fishing or camping trips. What does this have to do with the essay? How can I tell whether they understood it? Reader-based approaches have been criticized as inviting students to impose their own lives *over* a text, without regard to the meaning *within* a text. But listening to my students talk is all I have to do to reassure myself that a personal response not only leads to meaning for the reader but is grounded in the text.

After the students write, they get into groups of four and take turns reading their responses to one another. After each takes a turn, I ask them to discuss what their responses had in common and how they differed. They are surprised at how different their responses are and also reassured by some of the similarities. I see them turn naturally to the text, with no prompting from me, pointing to passages and quoting lines aloud to each other. I also hear them exchange personal stories prompted by one another's responses. They forget about me, and they lean forward in their chairs, talking to one another.

After these brief discussions in small groups, I ask them to take five more minutes to record in their notebooks anything they heard in the discussion that interested them or to write down new ideas about the essay. If questions have occurred to them—about the essay, about the writer, about the context of the essay—they should write them down also. A class discussion sometimes emerges from these questions.

This return to individual writing, after the sharing of responses, is a critical element in my application of reader-response strategies. Robert Probst's book *Response and Analysis: Teaching Literature in Junior and Senior High School* includes a statement from Louise Rosenblatt that articulates her view of the relationship between reader and text. Though she uses the term *poem* to define what the reader makes of a literary text, I suggest that her term applies to other kinds of texts as well; i.e., that each reader makes what is, for him or her, the essay.

> What each reader makes of the text is, indeed, *for him*, the poem, in the sense that this is his only direct perception of it. No one else can read it for him. He may learn indirectly about others' experiences with the text; he may come to see that his own was confused or impoverished, and he may then be stimulated to attempt to call forth from the text a better poem. But this he must do himself, and only what he himself experiences in relation to the text is—again let us underline—*for him*, the work.[1]

In my classes I try to make this learning from others' experiences direct rather than indirect. My experience as a reader tells me that no single reading of a text—whether it's a poem or an essay—is a complete reading. The reading community builds understandings of texts through interactions between the texts and the different knowledges and histories of the individuals reading them. The key here, though, is that the individual must, finally, read for himself or herself; and that's why I ask my students to write again, after they have talked about their initial responses.

Because I want my students to "call forth from the text a better poem"—in our case, a better essay—my classroom reading-response process doesn't end here. The students return to the essay and read it again and write about it again in their notebooks, expanding on their previous reactions. They may criticize it in some way, connect it to something else they have read or heard about, or extend its principles to another context. One student may write about the captivity of animals in zoos, another may write about contemporary Western materialism, another may write about apartheid. Still framed by personal reference points, these writings begin to show evidence of a fuller understanding.

Critics of the reader-response approach may wonder how students will learn the conventions of "literary analysis" if they are left to their own devices to write willy-nilly about what they read. Just as I see my students referring directly to the text in their initial discussions, so too do I see them using sections of the text in their notebook entries. These sections are not in formulaic explication paragraphs. Rather, my students find it natural to incorporate words from the text into their written responses, even when the teacher does not ask them to do so:

> I particularly liked the sentence "As I went up to him, where he was laying dead upon his stone, and actually when I was walking the few steps, he faded and grew pale, all color died out of him in one long sigh, and by the time that I touched him he was gray and dull like a lump of concrete." It felt like an emotional moment, a moment of reality that she didn't expect. It was a feeling of sorrow she had thought I too could visualize and empathize with. This reminded me of times when I thought I was

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[1] Louise M. Rosenblatt, *The Reader, the Text, the Poem: The Transactional Theory of the Literary Work*, © 1978 by Southern Illinois University Press. Quoted in Robert Probst, *Response and Analysis: Teaching Literature in Junior and Senior High School*. Portsmouth, N.H.: Boynton Cook Publishers, Inc., 1987, p. 243.

243

> doing something good, but it turned out to be bad. Once I thought when I was in elementary school that I should join with my friends when they made fun of this guy. After the first time I joined in, I felt so bad for myself and that guy. I realized it really hurt him and later (when we became close friends) he told me he never had friends. I still feel bad about it now.

It's not as difficult to show students how to quote passages effectively in their formal papers when they begin using passages naturally in their notebook responses.

Because I want my students to be conscious of the process they are engaging in, I ask them to reflect on it. I think it is this metacognitive awareness that invites them to begin redefining what reading is and what a text is. Specifically, I ask them to consider the movement from highly individual responses to shared interpretations and to comment on the series of reading, writing, and talking activities they went through. Examples of their comments are:

> I was able to clarify some thoughts during the discussion and it was reassuring to find that others had gotten some of the same messages as me from the essay. I was also exposed to ideas that were different from my own—and this allowed me to look at the essay in a different way.
>
> In this assignment I was forced to think about it three times and each time the analysis went a little deeper.
>
> I enjoyed writing anything that came into my head after reading the essay because that didn't limit me. Sometimes, when a professor asks me to write about a specific point, it hinders my true feelings and ideas about the article. Talking about the essay helped me to gain some insights into parts I did not understand. I learn so much more through discussion than I ever do in just reading by itself. Discussion forces me to thoroughly formulate my own ideas well enough to express them.

We proceed through the quarter, then, reading a wide variety of essays—reflections, analyses, arguments, reports—on all kinds of subjects. The particular sequence of reader-response activities may vary, but I have found the first personal response to be a critical *point of access* into the essay and the second response, which is often still anchored to the reader's own history, to offer an opportunity for deeper thinking. Topics for their formal papers begin to arise from their notebook responses to what they read, especially when they discover connections among their responses to several different essays.

By the end of my writing course, many of my students are changing as readers. They engage personally with an essay, they turn with enthusiasm to learn of their classmates' responses, they dig more deeply into the words of the text, and they freely challenge each other and criticize the text. When they describe an essay as boring, they do so because it *is* boring to them—not because it is an intimidating form selected by the teacher "for its umpteen hidden meanings."

My students are holding the keys to the castle. I hope they carry them beyond my classroom.

Sharing What Belongs to You: Minilessons and Lit Letters

By Joni Chancer
Teacher, Red Oak Elementary School,
Oak Park School District; and Teacher/Consultant,
South Coast Writing Project

"Before I can share something, it has to belong to me." Two years ago, Amy, a student in my sixth grade class, wrote this statement in a letter about a book she had just finished reading. It was followed with a question: "Do you know what I mean?"

I do know what Amy meant, and I believe that giving students a sense of ownership is the purpose of the reading and writing workshops that Nancie Atwell describes in her book, *In the Middle: Writing, Reading, and Learning with Adolescents.*[1] In the reading workshop, interpretation, response, and meaning belong first to the student and are then shared with the community of readers that includes the teacher and peers. Atwell identified what I hoped to create in my classroom, a "dining-room table" where readers could share the excitement, stimulation, and pleasure of talking about good books in the company of friends. The conversations, or book talks, are extended and enriched through two effective strategies: minilessons and lit letters.

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[1] Nancie Atwell, *In the Middle: Writing, Reading, and Learning with Adolescents.* Portsmouth, N.H.: Boynton Cook Publishers, Inc., 1987.

Minilessons

The research of Donald Graves[2] and Lucy Calkins[3] reveals how short, focused lessons based on response to student writing can provide opportunities for helping students to "read like writers" and write with conscious awareness of audience, purpose, style, and technique. Nancie Atwell describes how similar introductory lessons can help set the tone and focus of self-selected independent reading.

During the past three years, I have found several minilessons that are basic to the success of the reading workshop. The common factor is the emphasis on metacognitive thinking—a reflective understanding of the personal process of reading.

The way to begin any reading workshop is to read. The students and teacher have regularly scheduled opportunities for self-selected reading at least three times a week. When first starting the workshop, I begin each session with quick discussions on four basic questions:

How do you feel about reading?
What kinds of books do you like best?
What kinds of books have you read?
How often do you read?

Written and oral responses to these questions reveal significant information about the readers in my class. Typically, some students write that they do not enjoy reading because they "don't read well out loud" or they "don't read fast enough." Others report that they have read only the books they have been given in school. Many students read a certain type of book or a particular series of books over and over. Some students respond with enthusiasm about their love of reading.

This initial discussion has to take place. Collectively, we need to discard notions that students are labeled as good or bad readers. We discuss how some books need to be read slowly, while others can be read and understood quickly. Students are not expected to read aloud on command. We acknowledge that students have difficulty getting into a book if their only reading opportunities are ten minutes long. Students are often relieved to hear others admit their difficulties in sticking with some books. We discuss how the first chapter frequently sets the scene for the more exciting parts and builds relationships with the characters. We discuss how long a student should stay with a book before abandoning it and the fact that not finishing a book is a choice in the reading workshop.

The whole end of speech is to be understood.

CONFUCIUS

Starting with the first day, students realize that there is no one right answer in a discussion during a minilesson. Rather, students are encouraged to express their interpretations and opinions. As the conversations become increasingly focused, students are encouraged and challenged to support their opinions with evidence from the text. The transformation from passive reading to responsive, critical reading has begun.

Inevitably, students begin to mention favorite books ranging from childhood classics to contemporary selections. As this activity continues, I have the sense of chairs being pulled up around the dining room table. Someone will suggest a book to someone else, and I pass around books that former students have chosen as particular favorites. Finally, I read a few passages from some of the classroom library books I have especially enjoyed. The teacher's role diminishes as students converse about characters and books, and soon everyone is settled with something he or she has chosen to read.

Subsequent minilessons during the initial days of the reading workshop focus on books the students are enjoying. A few minutes are set aside for quick whole-group and individual conversations about favorite parts, particular characters, and exciting events. I encourage the students to "text-render," or quote favorite lines from their books at the end of the session. How different this activity is from forced oral reading! When the students have selected personally meaningful

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[2] Donald Graves, *Writing: Teachers and Children at Work*. Portsmouth, N.H.: Heinemann Educational Books, Inc., 1989.

[3] Lucy Calkins, *The Art of Teaching Writing*. Portsmouth, N.H.: Heinemann Educational Books, Inc., 1989.

> *Through the conversations of minilessons and the written dialogues of lit letters, all students can become exceptionally experienced readers.*
>
> JONI CHANCER

passages or individual sentences by themselves, they read with confidence and pleasure. What results is a taste for and a celebration of the best of what they are reading. Students savor the sound of words, particular descriptions, humor, drama, style, and voice in writing. Often, they record these lines on notecards and post them on a bulletin board in the classroom. The excitement grows, and the workshop belongs to the students collectively and individually.

By the end of the second week, I focus the minilessons on particular elements of reading. The questions deal with the author's development of a character in a work as shown in the following examples:

Who are the characters in your book?
What makes a character a **main** character?
How would you describe certain characters in your book?
Can you find passages that support your opinion?
What techniques has the author used to bring a character to life?
Have you ever written a similar character description?

Initially, the responses are superficial. Students label characters as good or bad or nice. Events involving characters are easily described, but students commonly do not have the vocabulary to state their opinions fully. The minilessons significantly improve the students' abilities to make interpretive descriptions.

In this case the reading workshop is complemented by the shared text experience. Although most of our reading time is spent with self-selected materials, we read together from a common core book during another time of the day. Often, I read this text aloud to the students, or we read together, using "jump in reading" or instant Reader's Theatre strategies. The common text provides a referent point, the "mental velcro," that ideas, descriptions, and opinions can stick to and be used for comparison.

During a minilesson we might discuss how Leslie Burke and Jesse Aarons, characters in the novel *Bridge to Terabithia,* differ. Descriptions of the characters' behavior in certain situations are matched to words that help the students express their opinions; for example, *sensitive, outgoing, shy, self-confident,* and *unique*. The discussion comes back to the self-selected books. Soon students are relating characters' actions to interpretations of personalities and motivations and eventually to opinions that are well supported with examples from the books. Not surprisingly, students' personal writing about fiction becomes richer with more developed character descriptions that reflect "reading like a writer."

As the weeks progress, new questions emerge for the minilessons:

What type of book are you reading?
What are the characteristics of this type of book?
Have you read others like it?
Have you written stories similar to the one in this book?

The connections to personal writing are invaluable. Discussions in the reading workshop about characteristics of genre frequently provide a prewriting structure for students who might not otherwise have attempted risking an experiment in a different style of writing.

Within a few months distinguishing between the reading and writing workshops becomes difficult. In many ways achieving this integration is my goal. Teachers who take a process approach to reading and writing know that the two cannot be separated. Soon minilessons in the writing workshop provide the focus for discussions or log entries in reading. After we have written "show, not tell," descriptions, we look for examples of this technique in our self-selected books. As we share different lead sentences in our books, we discuss our various options as writers in beginning our own pieces. When we look for passages that exemplify effective descriptions of setting, the settings described in student-authored books soon become increasingly rich and mood-evoking.

As a teacher I particularly delight in leading minilessons that combine the writing of my students and passages from the works of published authors. When the students "text-render" favorite lines from a piece written by a peer in the same way as they do with the work of published authors, I know the community encompasses all members of what Frank Smith refers to as the club of literacy. (Frank Smith is an author of several books about language and writing, a researcher of language, and the Chair in Language Education at the University of Victoria, British Columbia.)

The minilessons allow me to be creative in providing a focus to discussions in the reading and writing workshop. They provide a structure that is not preset or strictly defined. Instead, the minilessons are shaped in response to what the students find meaningful in their reading. The same question is answered differently by each student and will be answered differently with each new book that students read.

Inherent conversations about books in minilessons lead to a different type of dialogue, the talking on paper that Nancie Atwell describes as "lit letters."

Lit Letters

In the reading workshop, log entries are written for personal reflection and processing and help students express their connections with the text. When Nancie Atwell describes the writing of "lit letters," she introduces a new dimension to the workshop. Writing a letter to another student reflects an awareness of that person's identity as a reader and invites sharing of responses and information. For example, if Kyle knows that Jonathon enjoys mysteries and fantasies, Kyle might write a letter encouraging Jonathon to read the book *The House with a Clock in Its Walls*.

Although the sharing of lit letters between students is a powerful motivator in reading workshop, the effectiveness of this activity touches students in many ways. When students write the letters to their peers or to me, they are sometimes surprised at their discoveries about themselves. Dennis writes in his lit letter:

> Dear Mrs. Chancer,
>
> I've been reading *Ghost Host* for about two days now but I'm only on page 45 because I read a few pages and then I stop and think about what I read and what the setting is, the mood . . . I just try and get into the book a lot. It works for me. The book was sort of boring at the start, but when you get into it, it's pretty good. The ghosts in this book aren't weird and like Halloween goblins, but are believable. I'll stick with this book.

Recognizing his patterns as a reader, Dennis feels positive about the process of reading and rereading. He felt differently on the first day of school. He had considered himself to be a poor reader because he did not always read quickly.

In Amy's letter about the book she is reading, *The Dark Is Rising*, she responds to someone else's comment about the book. A student reported finding the novel hard to get into and saw little reason for its popularity. Amy loved the books in this series and was moved to defend the writing of Susan Cooper, the author. In her letter she states:

> I feel that the books of *The Dark Is Rising* are the kind of books you have to take your time on. They aren't books you can just skim through and get information. You have to be the kind of reader that enjoys reading slowly and figuring things out. I can't picture anybody getting bored with this book! It is my favorite set of books so far in my journey. There are little clues and hints that all fit together like a puzzle at the end of the chapters or the book. I suggest these books to anyone if they just stick with it! I admit that parts are hard to follow along with, especially in *The Grey King*. It is written in Welsh which is not easy to read. I showed my dad and he couldn't even read it. We read it together at night. It is neat because I get a chance to share this gift with him. I can't believe I used to hate!!! reading! Now I like it very much, and I am a good reader. I can't believe how many books I've read this year!

Amy sees that reading is not something that you do for a teacher or because it is good for you. She has become a reader by choice. Sheridan Blau, director of the South Coast Writing Project at the

University of California, Santa Barbara, describes several characteristics of personal literacy, each of which Amy demonstrates. She is willing to take risks, to read and reread, to sustain and focus her attention, and to be patient with ambiguities of the text.

The reading of shared texts or core literature books is a welcome addition to the reading workshop. The critical element of self-selection is in the response to the text, not exclusively the individual choice of text itself. Students must have regularly scheduled opportunities for self-selected reading; however, the shared enjoyment of a common book augments the community established in the reading workshop. Frequently, lit letters about self-selected books include comparisons to core books. Renea writes as follows:

> *A Taste of Blackberries* reminds me a lot of *Bridge to Terabithia*. In *A Taste of Blackberries*, Jamie and the author are good friends, and the author doesn't want to believe Jamie died. Remember in *Terabithia* how Jesse didn't want to believe that Leslie was dead?

Whether the lit letters are written about self-selected or shared books, I am always struck by how students respond at many levels of comprehension. The focused discussions of the minilessons provide the underlying structures for natural critical thinking. The synthesis of thinking and comprehending skills is evident in the lit letters—as in the reflective piece Kristin wrote to me:

> I've just finished reading *Prairie Songs*. It wasn't an "exciting" book that quickly took you here and there, here and there. It was a feeling book that led you through an ordinary life day by day. Pam Conrad had wonderful pacing in her story. She would bring back things she said in the beginning of the book. It had a shocking ending, though, and I could picture Mrs. Berryman's face, touched with terror.
>
> She described Lester so well! She didn't just say, "Lester was shy." She told me in other ways too. For example, he hid in the house when they were taking pictures, and he didn't talk at all to strangers.
>
> It seemed like all the women in this book didn't like living alone. Remember when Mrs. Downing compared herself with the cattle on the plains? For a project on the book, I'd like to paint the prairie.

Giving Reading Back to the Reader

The reading workshop supports process teaching in effective ways; but, more important, the workshop gives reading back to the reader. In the *Primary Language Record: Handbook for Teachers*, Myra Barrs includes a continuum that describes students' levels of reading, ranging from inexperienced to exceptionally experienced.[4] The reader at the top of the scale has the following characteristics:

- Is enthusiastic and reflective, with strong established tastes in fiction or nonfiction
- Enjoys pursuing own reading interests independently
- Can handle a wide range of texts, including some adult materials
- Recognizes that different kinds of texts require different styles of reading
- Is developing critical awareness as a reader

Through the conversations of minilessons and the written dialogues of lit letters, all students can become exceptionally experienced readers. The reading workshop becomes the place to share what belongs to you.

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[4] Myra Barrs and others, *Primary Language Record: Handbook for Teachers*. Portsmouth, N.H.: Heinemann Educational Books, Inc., 1989, p. 46.

RAGs for Sharing/ Responding

Using Read-Around Groups to Establish Criteria for Good Writing

By Jenee Gossard
Language Arts Consultant; Former English Department Chair, Culver City High School; and Former Codirector, UCLA Writing Project

A few years ago, I realized that the only way my students were ever going to learn to write better was for them to write more often, revise more willingly, and edit more effectively than they had been doing. In addition, they needed a wider and more "real" audience to write to as well as a clearer sense of the purpose for each piece of writing. In short, their entire writing experience needed to be much more extensive and much more realistic than it had been.

On the other hand, I definitely did not want to read and mark any more papers of the kind my students typically handed in—dashed off the night before, bloated with generalizations and cliches, riddled with irritating errors of expression and conventions. As I began to experiment with solutions to this dilemma, I found myself relying more and more on a modified small-group technique that seemed ideally suited to the special needs of a writing class.

The Read-Around Group Approach

Basically, the read-around group (RAG) approach gives students the opportunity to read and respond to each other's writing at various stages in the process of any assignment. For example, they read each other's first drafts to discover how others solved the problem of finding a subject and getting started. They read second and third drafts to note progress in shaping the paper according to criteria established in discussions of earlier drafts. Later, they help each other edit nearly finished papers for specific requirements of form, language use, and the conventions of writing. At the end of the process, they read and evaluate final drafts, celebrating improvements and editing for surface errors.

With each reading, students develop a more precise idea of what they want to say, to whom, and how. They experience writing as a process, and they discover that good writing rarely springs full-blown from the author's brow, but must be carefully shaped over a period of time. They begin to recognize the importance of their audience as they become accustomed to writing for real readers—their classmates—instead of just for the teacher, a most unreal creature, in their eyes. From the student's point of view, perhaps the most helpful aspect of using the RAG method is that, for the first time, each student has a clear notion of what other students do to solve writing problems. Papers written by their peers provide much more useful models than do the professionally written examples in textbooks.

For the teacher one of the most important advantages of using RAGs is that the students read, discuss, and revise their papers three or four times before ever handing them in, which means not only that the submitted papers are at a fairly advanced stage of development but also that they are relatively free from gross errors in language and mechanics. As a result, the teacher can comment more directly on issues of composition—organization, development, tone, point of view, and effective use of language—rather than devoting so much time to matters of spelling, grammar, punctuation, and other conventions.

The Steps in the RAG Process

As I began to use RAGs regularly, I devised several procedures to streamline the process and make it more effective. I learned that small groups work best when they have a very specific task to perform and not quite as much time to complete it as they would like. Several of the procedures are so useful to me that I will describe them for you in some detail.

The first day. On the first day, after a brief prewriting activity (clustering or brainstorming—anything open-ended), students write for ten minutes on a topic, using code numbers instead of their names to identify their papers. Then they form groups of four. At my signal, each group leader passes his or her group's papers to the next group, where they are distributed and read quickly—30 seconds for each paper. At the end of each 30-second interval, I give the signal to pass the papers to the next reader in the group. When the set of four papers has been read, each group chooses the paper it liked the best in that set. The group's recorder notes the code number of the chosen paper, while the leader holds up the set of papers to indicate that the group has finished making its choice. When all groups have made a choice (generally, this takes less than a minute), I give the signal for the leaders to pass the papers on to the next group. We repeat this process until all groups have read every set except their own.

When all the sets of papers have been read, I print the code numbers chosen by each group on the chalkboard. Students enjoy seeing whether any group chose their papers as the best in the set of four papers theirs traveled with. Inevitably, some code numbers appear more than once. I call for any papers chosen several times and read them aloud, asking the students to identify the qualities of the best papers they read. As they enumerate the specific "best" qualities they noticed in reading around, I write them on the chalkboard. Their list usually includes such items as good details and description, interesting beginning, consistent tone, good beginning, and so forth. The list on the chalkboard becomes a simple rubric which the students are to follow in revising their ten-minute paper for the next day. In their new drafts, I ask them to include from the rubric two or three specific items related to organization and development. The new versions, stapled on top of the originals, must be at least one full page, but no longer than one and one-half pages.

The second day. On the second day I use the same RAG procedure, but this time I ask my students to use the criteria from the rubric in choosing the best paper in each set. Among the second day's "best" papers will be several that had not been chosen in the first day's RAG. Thus, students who worked hard to improve their original versions are rewarded for their efforts, while some of the first day's "stars," who rested on their laurels by simply recopying their popular originals, find themselves back in the middle of the pack.

After this second RAG, I generally spend a few class sessions discussing sample copies of some of

From the student's point of view, perhaps the most helpful aspect of using the RAG method is that, for the first time, each student has a clear notion of what other students do to solve writing problems.

JENEE GOSSARD

the papers the class chose most often in order to refine the rubric on which their third versions will be based.

The third day. On the day the third version is due, I use a modified RAG procedure in which I ask the students to focus on very specific elements of the rubric. In this first editing phase, students pass their papers within their own group only, checking and marking each other's papers for only one element at each reading. For example, in the first turn, readers may be asked to make a note in the margin next to the opening and closing lines if these lines contain the required content or form. In the second and third turns, I may ask readers to underline concrete details, specific examples, or lines of dialogue—whatever the rubric specifically requires in terms of organization and development.

The second phase of this editing RAG requires the students to pass the papers around their groups again to identify problems in language use. This time, on the first turn, readers are to circle all forms of *to be*. On the second turn they circle all *dead words* (e.g., *thing, very, so, really, a lot,* and other empty or overused words), while on the third turn readers bracket all repeated sentence openers (e.g., "There is," "And then," "The boy . . ."). Later in the semester, I may ask them to star all repeated words and bracket short, choppy sentences for sentence-combining work. After this RAG session, their final draft is due. It should incorporate appropriate changes suggested by the marks of the student editors.

The fourth day. When the students submit the fourth version of their papers, I repeat the RAG procedure from the first day, allowing a little more time for the reading of each paper (up to one minute), as these final versions tend to be more concentrated than earlier ones. After posting the chosen numbers, I have the students proofread each other's papers for spelling and sentence errors before handing them in. Then I read aloud the best of the best, compliment the writers on a job well done, and take the whole set home to read for the first time. And a pleasant reading it is, too, compared to what it might have been had I taken home their first or second drafts. Because all earlier versions are handed in along with the newest ones, I can easily see the changes that have been made from the original writing. Thus, I can praise a student's efforts to revise, even if the overall quality of the latest version is only average in comparison with others in the class.

For longer papers (more than two pages), or more complex assignments, I use variations of the RAG method in which students read their papers aloud to their group, followed by a discussion of each paper's strengths and weaknesses. For essays of argument, I use RAGs to teach thesis paragraphs, counterarguments, supporting arguments, and concluding paragraphs, spending one RAG session on each element separately. In remedial classes I use the editing-style RAG procedure, requiring readers to find and note paragraph indentions, capitals and end punctuation, dead words, contractions, fragments, run-ons, and other specific items related to the skills we have been working on. The read-around group technique can be easily modified to suit almost any situation arising in a composition class.

Suggestions for RAG Sessions

Here are some general considerations for setting up a successful RAG session:

1. Students should use code numbers instead of names on their papers to reduce anxiety by preserving anonymity.
2. Groups should be as nearly equal in size as possible. If your class number is not divisible by four or five, make sure that the odd-sized group(s) is smaller than the others rather than larger. Groups of four or five students are best for most tasks; fewer than four provide too little interaction; more than five may have difficulty sticking to the task.
3. Appoint a leader and a recorder in each group; define their duties clearly.
4. Give the groups a specific task to perform in a strictly limited amount of time. For example, you might ask them to read quickly and select the best paper in the set or circle all forms of *to be*. As an alternative to choosing the "best" paper in each round, a different criterion could be used for each new set. For example, one round might be used to choose the paper with the best opening; the next, to choose the paper with the most information, an unusual or unexpected element, the most vivid visual images, the strongest arguments, the best ending, and so on.
5. Keep close track of time. I use a stopwatch so that students learn to pace themselves against a fixed time period. Do not let students pass papers on until you give the signal; otherwise the reading process will quickly become chaotic.
6. Set up a simple system for reading and passing papers. My students follow this system:
   a. Group leaders collect papers from their own group members and, at my signal, pass the set to the next group in a counterclockwise direction around the room.
   b. Students read each paper in the prescribed time, passing it to the person on their *right* in their group. Students pass papers only when I give the signal to pass—not before and not after.
   c. When the set has been read (I keep a tally as I time the reading so that I know when each set is finished), I tell the groups to choose the best paper, reminding them of the specific criteria for that day.
   d. Recorders write the number of the chosen paper on a self-sticking note. Leaders then collect the papers and hold them up to signal that their group is finished.
   e. When all the leaders indicate readiness to continue, I say, "Change groups," and the leaders pass the set on to the next group.
7. Do not ask students to choose the best paper from among the papers in their own group; it is too threatening, at least at first.
8. Keep the papers short for whole-group read-around sessions; papers longer than two pages can be handled better by being read aloud in a small group, followed by discussion.

Advantages of Using Read-Around Groups

There are many advantages to using read-around groups. For the student the following advantages are the most important:

1. Writing for, and getting response from, a "real" audience
2. Gaining useful ideas, approaches, and perspectives from reading and hearing other students' writing
3. Revising their papers several times before having them graded
4. Knowing where they stand in relation to other students
5. Gaining a clearer understanding of writing as a process
6. Sharpening editing skills

For the teacher these advantages stand out:

1. Students write more often, but the teacher does not read more papers.
2. Gross errors decline significantly with each revision following a RAG session and discussion.
3. Papers are better written and more interesting to read.
4. Students learn to evaluate their own and others' work.
5. Students have fewer complaints about grades.
6. Students' handwriting improves. This last phenomenon occurs when students with good ideas but poor handwriting realize that their papers are being passed over in the choosing process because they are too hard to read.

Of all the techniques I have used over the years, the RAG has been the most useful and the most versatile. Though it requires careful planning and strict monitoring, the extra effort pays off in better writing and improved attitudes. Students enjoy it, too, for it gives them a chance to share. Most important, it focuses attention on the act of composing itself, demystifying the process and thereby giving students more confidence in their abilities to write better at every new step.

Practical Ideas for Read-Around Groups

Students' Reactions to the Read-Around

By Sheila Koff
Instructor of English, Orange Coast College;
and Teacher/Consultant, UCI Writing Project

"Please take out some paper and a pen to begin writing," I shouted above the restless din of my high school composition class.

"Oh, no, do we have to write already?" moaned Eddie from the back of the room.

Although I did not want to admit it, my fourth period class was my least favorite writing class, and the 100°F Santa Ana weather condition, along with the broken air conditioner, did not help. The students were tired and restless from roasting and sitting for three straight periods. And I was exhausted from standing in the heat for the same amount of time.

Their uncomfortable tedium subsided somewhat as we began to cluster on the chalkboard descriptions of numerous vivid memories.

"What about a first kiss? Is that a vivid memory?" roared athletic Greg to successive embarrassed giggles.

"Of course, Greg," I responded, "if that kiss has already been obtained." A few more chuckles arose. "Now, I want you all to write for ten minutes about just one of these memorable events. Don't worry about grammar, spelling, or punctuation. But do realize that almost everyone in this room will be reading your anonymously labeled paper. Keep your pens moving as quickly as possible, trying to describe your story with much detail. Have you any questions? Then begin."

A rare hush visited the room as 35 minds settled down to ponder what to write. The heat did not feel quite so suffocating.

"Now that your ten minutes are up, pass your papers to your table's group leader. That person is to pass the set clockwise to the next table."

Further specific read-around instructions were given. A few more questions were answered as many impatient students eagerly began reading their peers' writing. Debbie, usually bored with existence, twittered behind her first paper. Other eyes, often glazed from daydreaming, now glinted while hurriedly dancing back and forth across the pages.

"Stop. Your minute is up. Pass your paper to the right and begin the next story," I said, glancing at my stopwatch.

"What? A minute can't be up! I just started!" howled Rosemary.

"Ah, come on, Ms. Koff. I'm just getting to the best part," complained Eddie again.

"Can't we have more time?" asked another.

"I'm sorry, but the class period is almost over. You still need to finish reading at least one full set of papers and to pick your favorite. I promise to let you finish them tomorrow." I could not believe what I had said.

Waves of heated protests from my once yawning crew greeted each of my orders to "stop" and to begin reading a new paper. Jenee Gossard's "minute read-around" captivated not only the hearts but also the imaginations of my composition students. And this enthusiasm remained for the second and third days of subsequent sharing, revising, and peer-group responding.

To my relief and joy, this scene repeats itself every time, no matter what level of class I am teaching. Need any more be said about the significance of peer review, peer modeling, and peer recognition—all evolving from the read-around in the English composition classroom?

Using Read-Around Groups in a Biology Class

By Judith Sanderson

Biology and English Teacher, Culver City High School;
and Teacher/Consultant, UCLA Writing Project

Read-around groups are highly effective for improving my students' understanding of the content of the biology course as well as helping them to express themselves accurately and clearly when writing about science. In my biology class students write for a variety of purposes, including reporting laboratory experiments, reviewing films, and summarizing articles. I may ask them to describe a process or to explain the use and care of laboratory equipment. A typical writing assignment may involve summarizing what they have learned about a major topic, such as "enzymes" or "photosynthesis," and I give my students a list of vocabulary words they must use in their papers. They must also illustrate their major points with specific examples drawn from their laboratory work or reading. The best papers contain the correct information, illustrated with pertinent examples, and written in the most readable format.

In a read-around session, students code their papers with identification numbers to preserve anonymity. They work in groups of three or four, reading and passing the coded papers at my signal. After finishing each set of papers, each group picks the best paper in that set and then passes the papers to the next group. As the papers are passed around the room, students quickly notice that the good papers are similar in content, organization, and style. This experience gives them an inductive model for good writing on this assignment.

While students are sharing papers in read-around groups, I may ask them to do several different tasks, depending on the purpose of the assignment and the time available. The simplest procedure is to ask students to pick the best of each set as they read around. At the end of the session, I tabulate the results and read aloud two or three of the papers that were chosen most often. A more involved approach is to ask students to focus on and mark a single element at each turn: bracket the main idea, underline correctly used terminology, and star effectively written sentences. These two activities can also be combined: a basic read-around followed by the marking session. Whenever appropriate, students are encouraged to revise their papers according to the good models they have read. After a read-around session on final drafts, I distribute copies of the best student-selected papers to the class and post a set of them in a display case.

I find read-around groups useful for teaching biological concepts as well as for evaluating finished pieces of writing. For example, I may ask each student to generate a large cluster around a key term, such as *organelle*. (For suggestions on clustering see Gabriele Lusser Rico's article, which appears earlier in this book.) Then my students circulate copies of their clusters until each student has read several samples. When they get their own clusters back, I tell them to add appropriate items "stolen" from the clusters they have seen. Such an activity might precede a discussion of the topic, lead to a written definition of the term, or serve as a review for a test. As a matter of fact, whenever a read-around occurs before a major examination, I encourage students to "steal" useful information by making notes as they read.

In a high school biology class, read-around groups work effectively to clarify course content and to reinforce a scientific approach to problem solving. The read-around group procedure connects students to course content in ways that teacher-student interactions do not. The process is a kind of peer teaching; when students read what other students write, they see how others organize information, use vocabulary, and follow directions. When they know that their audience is composed of their peers, they want to do a better job; they increase the level of their performance if they know peer judgment will follow. Most important, without risking exposure, they see their written work in relation to the work of others in the class. For some this is a rewarding experience; for others it is an enlightening shock.

Through the read-around process, my students learn to distinguish between writing that expresses a concept clearly and accurately and writing that does not. In addition, they increase their understanding of the course content through sharing ideas in groups. Thus, the process improves not only their writing skills but also their mastery of basic biological concepts.

Using Read-Around Groups for Holistic Scoring

By Trudy J. Burrus
Former English Teacher, El Toro High School,
Coordinator, Healthy Kids,
Saddleback Valley Unified School District;
and Teacher/Consultant, UCI Writing Project

Having first learned about read-around groups (RAGs) in their second or third generation, I did not know the finer details of RAGs; so I took the essence of the approach, as I knew it, and improvised. What I ended up with was a RAG that incorporated holistic scoring, too. Thus, in one final-stage RAG, I get the top papers in the class and scores for all papers.

I have been training my students to score compositions holistically for several years, and I recognize the critical need for a clear, strong rubric. At the same time that it must reflect the individual assignment, I prefer a rubric that is standard in form and mechanics. As a result, I use a basic six-point rubric as the foundation for the individualized versions. (For more information on holistic scoring, see the evaluation section later in this book.) The students become quite skilled at focusing on the specifics of an assignment, so we can agree on a final rubric quite rapidly. Once it is in final form, the rubric gets three to four minutes of silent attention from everyone. If the students request additional time to internalize the rubric, they are given it without question.

Ideally, students are placed in groups of four or five. I often sit in to round out the number, and my participation in the process lends a measure of formality that seems to encourage an even more conscientious attitude from my students. A group leader and clerk distribute papers and materials and record scores.

The leaders gather the papers from the members of their groups. (Students do not score their own papers.) Attached to the back of each set of papers are seven or eight score sheets, one for each group in the room. Each student writer has entered an identification number at the top of each score sheet and has written the letters *A* through *E* on the sheet (if there are five in the group) for the readers' scores. Each leader passes the group's papers clockwise to the next group, and they are redistributed there. Each member of each group has an assigned letter (again, usually *A* through *E*, depending on the number in the group), and the clerk records the letters on an index card for future reference. The group leader is always *A*; the person on the leader's left is always *B*. Then the holistic read-around begins.

I allow one minute for the reading of each paper. This provides ample time for the students to read the papers and to determine holistic scores. Each student turns the paper over, records in pen a holistic score on the top score sheet beside his or her letter, and holds the paper until given the signal to pass the paper to the person on the left. After all papers have been read by the group, the leader records the best paper of the stack and collects the papers. Then the clerk collects the completed score sheets and clips them together. (Because the scores given by any one group are not seen by the next group, it is easy for me to tell whether one group is grading consistently high or low and to remedy the situation rapidly. Using the

> *Editing is easy. All you have to do is cross out the wrong words.*
>
> MARK TWAIN

clerk's record of readers' letters assigned before the RAG began, I can also tell whether any one student is grading inconsistently.) The scored stack of papers is passed to the next group, and the process is repeated until the stack is returned to the originating group.

The final step is for the clerks to hand the clipped score sheets to the leader of the appropriate group, who then distributes them to the writers. Each student can immediately figure his or her average score. The students staple their score sheets to the back of their papers before they turn them in. I also call for the best paper from each stack, and we discuss those papers, focusing on their outstanding aspects.

With a well-trained class and an efficient handling of the papers, a class of 35 can complete the entire RAG process in a 50-minute period. While my students are scoring, they are internalizing criteria for evaluating the papers of others; they can apply the criteria to their own first and final drafts of subsequent papers. At the same time, I am lightening my own paper load without reducing the number of writing assignments. I can then respond to selected papers or particular assignments in more depth and can provide the kind of content-based feedback that will genuinely help students improve their writing.

Rewriting/ Editing

Competence for Performance in Revision

By Sheridan Blau

Vice-Chair, Department of English,
and Director, South Coast Writing Project,
University of California, Santa Barbara

Once we begin to think seriously about revision, we are likely to feel some confusion about what acts of mind or writing behavior ought to be called by that name. All composition theorists warn us against making the easy mistake of thinking of revision as merely the last stage in a linear three-stage composing process. That is because, in composing, revision can and does take place at any time. Studies of the thinking processes of writers show that nearly every writer is constantly reviewing, evaluating, and changing words and ideas at every moment in the composing process—as much perhaps while the writer is planning what he or she might want to say as when the person has already begun to write sentences on paper.

Our conception of revision will be only momentarily clarified if we forget about when it takes place in the linear organization of the composing process and define it more operationally as the thinking and behavior that writers engage in whenever they rework any piece of a text that they have already drafted or partially drafted. As every writing teacher knows, however, not all redrafting entails revision. For many students, rewriting means copying a draft over neatly in ink. And if nothing counts as revision except what gets written and rewritten on paper, what will we call the mental activities of writers who in their minds perform the same operations of selecting, altering, and deleting that less experienced writers might have to carry out in more obvious stages on paper?[1]

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[1] Donald H. Graves and his colleagues at the University of New Hampshire noticed precisely such a progression as a mark of development in the young writers they studied. That is to say, they observed children at one stage making language choices and alterations on paper which, at a later stage in their development, they would make mentally.

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Toward a Unified Theory of Revision

In spite of all these complications in our understanding of revision—or perhaps because of them—there has begun to emerge a fairly clear picture of what revision—in any and all of its manifestations—entails as a thinking process or set of intellectual skills. These are skills that can be taught and learned or at least encouraged and nourished in the context of an instructional program in composition.

We can take an important step toward a unified theory of revision by recognizing that all of the various activities we might want to call revision can probably be said to belong to one of the two classes of revision that Donald Murray has designated "internal" and "external."[2] Internal revision refers to the process through which writers, in the production, evaluation, and amendment of their own emerging texts, gradually discover for themselves what it is that they mean to say. External revision, in contrast, entails the amending of an already written *text for the sake of a reader*, so that the reader will be able to understand it as unambiguously and efficiently as possible.

Virtually every theory of the composing process implicitly or explicitly postulates internal and external revision. Sondra Perl speaks of them under the headings of "retrospective" and "projective" structuring.[3] She defines the first as the process through which writers, in composing, use their language not to communicate something they already know but to come to know for themselves something they do not yet know except as a vague feeling or "felt sense." She points out, furthermore, that when we discover and give articulate shape to our inchoate felt sense of a meaning, we necessarily restructure our sense of what the meaning is that we are trying to articulate. Retrospective structuring, then, refers to the way in which during composition we oscillate between expression and revision—attempting to express what we do not yet know and, through that attempt, revising our sense of what it is we are trying to come to know.

Projective structuring, on the other hand, is directed not to the discovery and construction of our emerging meaning for ourselves but to the communication of a meaning we already know to our readers. It refers to the effort writers make to accommodate the expression of their ideas to the needs of their auditors or to the requirements of a situation. It would include revising in order to use more acceptable diction, to achieve mechanical correctness, or to meet the requirements of a specialized form (a laboratory report, research paper, and so forth).

All competent writers engage in some projective structuring. All want to meet the needs of their readers. However, studies of the differences between the composing processes of competent and incompetent writers consistently reveal that competent writers, in most of their composing, are principally engaged in retrospective structuring, turning more to projective structuring only after they have discovered the substance of their ideas in a fairly complete form. Incompetent writers, on the other hand, seem to give most of their attention to form rather than content from the moment they begin writing. Typically, poor writers pause so frequently to amend their language or correct real or imagined mechanical errors that they are unable to develop or follow any continuous line of thought long enough to see what it is. Their thinking, therefore, appears to be discontinuous and impoverished.

The Dimensions of Competence in Revision

If we reflect on the kind of thinking that is entailed in revising, in any of its modes or stages—that is, in the early stage of revising to discover one's ideas, in the later stage of amending a text to suit the needs of one's readers, or even in the stage of copy editing and proofreading—we will see that two apparently opposite acts of mind are required. These are *commitment* and *detachment*.

In identifying the writer's commitment as a dimension of his or her competence to engage in revision, I am acknowledging the fact that writing—insofar as it calls for revision—is characteristically a difficult, frustrating, and time-consuming process. Inexperienced writers frequently experience the difficulties of the task as evidence of their

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[2] Donald M. Murray, "Internal Revision: A Process of Discovery," in *Learning by Teaching: Selected Articles on Writing and Teaching*. Upper Montclair, N.J.: Boynton Cook Publishers, Inc., 1982.

[3] Sondra Perl, "Understanding Composing," *College Composition and Communication*, Vol. 31 (December, 1980), 363–369.

> *No inducement to revision is likely to carry us as far through the difficulties of the process as the prospect of having our work published.*
>
> SHERIDAN BLAU

own incompetence as writers. Experienced writers know that frustration and feelings of incompetence are among the most difficult challenges any writing task is likely to pose for any writer.

Only if we attribute enough value to what we have to say are we likely to make the effort required to get our ideas straight, even for ourselves. The less commonplace our ideas and the more they derive from our own independent thinking, the more difficult it is likely to be for us to discover them for ourselves or to articulate them precisely for our readers. When the task of articulation feels impossible or too arduous to endure (as it often will in composing any piece worth writing), then we must depend in spite of such feelings on our faith that the job we have taken on for ourselves can be completed and that we are capable of completing it. Thus, of the two qualities of mind that account for a writer's competence in revision, the first of them, commitment, requires two underlying acts of the will—one finding value in the completion of the writing task and the other, consisting of faith (despite feelings to the contrary) in one's capacity to meet the challenge of the task.

The second enabling or prerequisite skill for competence in revision is the intellectual skill of *detachment*. This entails distancing ourselves from our own writing in order to take the perspective of a reader. Such a perspective is especially necessary as writers move from retrospective structuring to projective—from getting their ideas straight for themselves to getting them straight for a reader, or in moving from writer-based to reader-based revising. To the degree that writers appear able to make such a shift in perspective, we may say that they are exhibiting *empathy*. As a competence underlying detachment, *empathy* refers to a writer's or speaker's ability to see things from someone else's point of view. The more writers want to have an impact on their readers, the more they need to understand how readers are likely to respond to their discourse.

Empathy does not quite describe the underlying skill that enables writers to achieve the kind of distance or detachment that is necessary for internal revision—the revision through which writers gradually discover and take possession of their own emerging ideas. Here it is not necessary to project oneself imaginatively into the mind of some other reader but to assume the detached perspective of oneself as reader rather than writer of the text being produced. Competent writing and revising requires writers, at intervals, to step back from the production of their texts with sufficient distance to judge whether or not the words appearing on the page match their sense of the intended meaning. When writers as readers find a mismatch, they also find opportunities to work further to discover their intended meaning or, just as likely, to revise their intention.

Competence in revision, as I have defined it, may therefore be said to have two principal dimensions: an affective dimension, which I have called *commitment;* and a cognitive dimension, which I have called *detachment*. The first is a function of writers' attitudes toward themselves and their tasks; the second, of their cognitive abilities to perform the tasks. For any task of composing, writers will be committed to the degree that they value the assignment they are engaged in and retain faith or confidence in their capacity to complete it. Their capacity for the competent completion of the task will, in turn, be a function of their having learned to detach themselves sufficiently from their text to engage in the evaluative and empathic procedures that revising entails as they attempt to discover their ideas for themselves and adjust their discourse to the needs of their readers. Graphically, we may represent the dimensions of competence in revision as shown in Figure 1.

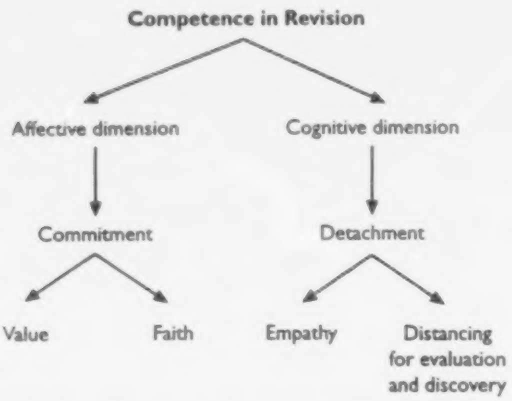

Fig. 1. Dimensions of Competence in Revision

Strategies to Develop Competence in Revision

A variety of instructional strategies are available for the teacher who is intent on helping students acquire the disciplines of commitment and detachment that underlie competence in revision. Many of them are described elsewhere in this book. They include the use of writing-response groups of the sort proposed by Peter Elbow; the use of "read-around groups," as described by Jenee Gossard; and considerable effort at following Mary K. Healy's advice about finding genuine situations that call for real communicative writing for students instead of "dummy runs." Taken together, activities like these help students discover the value of writing as a genuine communicative act directed toward a real audience whose differing perspectives must be taken into account.

Building Communities of Writers. Students in writing-response groups, in particular, learn to become more empathic readers, not simply from getting the responses of others to their own work, but from reading the work of peers and thereby seeing through their own experience what readers need and can expect from writers like themselves. Writing-response groups can also be important for what they contribute to turning the writing class into a community of writers. In such a community much of the conversation and instruction are focused on the difficulties and challenges that the student writers encounter while they are engaged in the composing process. Through such discussions students usually find themselves better able to work out the self-management strategies they need to sustain the effort that revision often requires.

Ideally, teachers will become active members of their classroom communities of writers by writing along with their students and sharing their experiences of anxiety, frustration, and satisfaction in the composing process. Students need to see their teachers write in order to see that the most accomplished writers are not those who write most easily. They need to see how much it is the case that the competence of most writers consists less of facility than of staying power—a power that derives from their recognition of the value of the enterprise they are engaged in and from their faith in their capacity to continue making progress in it, even after they begin to feel defeated by it.

Inviting Drafting and Redrafting. If we want our students truly to revise, we need to give them opportunities to get a number of writing projects started so that they may choose to revise only those that hold the most interest or promise for them. Most of us produce many starts—a few notes, some pages of an early draft—on projects that are simply not worth revising or else need to be put aside for the months or years it might take before we ripen to the challenge they pose. Teachers who want to make their classes into authentic environments for writing and revising will, therefore, deliberately cultivate the production of a great many starts on pieces in progress—quick rough drafts that may or may not be taken any further. Only when students have had the opportunity to produce three or four such pieces in rough first-draft form (and perhaps received some responses on them from peer readers) should they be required to commit themselves to the further revision of their most promising pieces in progress.

Real *reseeing* (revision), rather than obedient tinkering with the surface features of the text, will occur when writers have a sense of the value of their thoughts and have a need to enhance, clarify, recast, or elaborate on their original messages.

A related way to nurture revision as an integral part of the composing process for our students is to provide them with lots of experiences in experimental and exploratory writing in journals or notebooks. These can serve as repositories for ideas, lists, clusters, and starts on drafts that writers may return to selectively to find material worth developing into completed pieces of writing. Students will benefit particularly from being encouraged to do a good deal of free-writing (nonstop recording of a writer's continuous thoughts on a subject) in such notebooks. The virtue of freewriting in teaching revision is that it helps writers discover the value of their "naked" thoughts—thoughts that can sometimes be discovered most fully when the writers attend only to them, putting aside momentarily the distractions of a concern for correctness or form or the needs of a reader. Even for very young writers, one of the first steps toward learning to revise seems to come with the recognition that in the initial stages of one's writing, it is an acceptable and proper procedure to produce messy, incorrect, and hastily composed work that is intended as material for revision.

Authorship as a Motive for Revision

Among the most effective strategies teachers can use to help students discover the value of their own ideas (and hence the value of clarifying and communicating them) is that of taking those ideas seriously—examining them not with the eye of a corrector but with the respect of one who would learn from them. A teacher who can give the time and concentrated effort required to respond to student writing as a partner in an intellectual dialogue will find that several benefits flow from it. First, the teacher's actions testify to the value of a student's ideas. Second, the teacher will be modeling a mode of response that students would do well to imitate in responding to each other's work as well as to literature and other assigned readings.

Finally, the dialogue between student-writer and teacher-respondent (which can be continued with an answering response from the student and another from the teacher) offers both participants an opportunity for additional learning through their continuing exchange and clarification of ideas—an exchange that continues to take place in writing.

School writing assignments often subvert the normal relationship that emerges between the writer and reader by asking students to write on subjects about which they are less well informed than their teachers are. In such a transaction the writer is relieved of most of the responsibility that a real author bears for accommodating what he or she has to say to the understanding of his or her readers. Teachers who would have their students develop a capacity for detachment will therefore encourage them to write on topics about which they (the students) have more authoritative knowledge than their readers.

Metaprocessing as a Strategy for Revision

Aside from having their students write about what they know with some authority (i.e., as "authors"), teachers can help students develop their ability for detachment or perspective-taking by employing a number of instructional methods that may be loosely characterized as *metaprocessing* activities. These are activities that call on students to treat their own texts and writing processes as objects of inquiry. Metaprocessing describes most of the talk that takes place in writing-response groups and in teacher-student conferences. Such talk can sometimes become more focused and productive if students are asked to keep writing-process logs in which they record and reflect on their composing processes, including their responses to each of their own completed drafts for each writing task they undertake.

> *Pruning writing is the same as pruning apple trees: The point is not so much to get rid of the dead branches (which are easy enough to spot) as it is to shape the tree to produce the best possible fruit.*
>
> BRUCE O. BOSTON

Most of the revising and editing tricks that experienced teachers are fond of showing to their students also entail metaprocessing. One such trick is to have students outline drafts of their essays after they finish them. From such an outline students can gain new perspectives on the structure of their essays—on the relative emphasis they have given to main and subordinate points and on the progression of their arguments.

In another metaprocessing activity students write brief summary statements of each of their completed drafts (or of each paragraph) in the form of what Linda Flower calls a *WIRMI* statement: "What I Really Mean Is . . ."[4] Having written WIRMIs, students may be able to stand far enough back from their essays to ask productively if they actually said in the essays what they meant to say. An exceptionally promising activity of this sort is to ask students to write revised drafts of their essays without looking back at their first drafts and then to have students write a comparison of the two versions. Since the two versions will tend to be very different (especially for the poorest writers), the task of comparing them forces the writers to pay close attention to the written content of their two essays, separate from whatever intentions may have informed either or both of them.[5] This distancing exercise provides practice in assuming the detached perspective that one needs to revise effectively.

A much simpler distancing assignment, yet one that almost always yields surprising benefits for unskilled writers, is to have students read drafts of their essays aloud before they revise or submit them. This can be done in the presence of another person, in the context of a writing group, or even in private. When writers read their texts out loud—to themselves or to other persons—they become more apt to hear the text themselves. Unskilled student writers rarely reread their texts out loud as they compose. Skilled writers almost always do.

Publishing as a Strategy to Encourage Revision

Publishing is the last instructional strategy I want to mention here for its role in encouraging revision. However much we may want through our writing to gain possession of our thoughts or to communicate with our readers, no inducement to revision is likely to carry us as far through the difficulties of the process as the prospect of having our work published. Many forms of publishing are possible within the context of a classroom, particularly if we think of publication in its root sense of "making public." These forms can range from having students read their work out loud to the entire class, to posting work on bulletin boards or in school display cases, to producing dittoed, mimeographed, or photocopied anthologies of student work from a single class. Many teachers have found that in working on long-term projects, students will be encouraged to revise carefully when they know that they will individually make a hard-cover binding for their completed work so that it might be kept in the classroom or library for reference by future students. The promise of publication is a promise of fame, however limited. If that makes it appealing to a student's vanity, it is surely a tolerable vanity and one that can do a writer much good.

The strategies I have identified here are all aimed at fostering in students the commitment necessary to communicate something of value and the detachment required to discover, articulate, and reformulate an intended meaning for an intended audience. Taken together, they imply respect on the part of the teacher for the process of composing and an appreciation of the importance of a humanly rich communicative context, both for the acquisition of competence in composition and for its realization in performance.

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[4] Linda Flower, *Problem-Solving Strategies for Writing*. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc., 1981.

[5] Will Garrett-Petts of the University of British Columbia has experimented with the technique of withholding first drafts while students create a second version.

Practical Ideas for Revising

Stages in the Revising Process

By Michael O'Brien

English Instructor, Allan Hancock College, Santa Maria;
and Teacher/Consultant, UCI Writing Project

Good writers are "schizophrenic," some claim. Certainly, they tend to be fluent, imaginative creators; on the other hand, most writers also seem to be meticulous, disciplined craftsmasters. William Blake, the English artist, poet, and visionary, actually created his own complex mythology. Yet what book of poems has such exquisite, careful symmetry as his *Songs of Innocence and of Experience*? Wild William must have been a careful reviser. Likewise, we teachers want student fluency and creativity; yet we also preach, "Revise! Revise! Revise! The way to Heaven is through revision!" But how can we teach revision? And are the acts of creation and revision really that opposite?

I am not sure that we can teach revision any more than we can teach creativity. However, we can give guidelines, we can model behavior, and we can provide opportunities where effective revision, like creativity, can take place. Revision is a recursive process within the larger writing process. I would like to describe the opportunities for effective revision that have been working for my students.

Students should not revise too early in the writing process. I ask them to refrain from revising or editing while they are prewriting and doing the rough draft. Revising at this stage can seriously hamper fluency. Instead, they should be carving out big blocks of thought and trying to fit them together into a coherent structure. They should be using the mallet and chisel, not the jeweler's file.

When they have completed their rough drafts, we review the rubric (the criteria on which the paper will be evaluated), which was initially introduced before the first draft. The students then examine their own papers, asking themselves, "Okay, how does my rough draft measure up?" After reviewing the rubric, we discuss typical problems with that assignment. For a descriptive paper, I might warn students against telling rather than showing, for example. At this stage, I am trying to help them to envision their ideal paper that might evolve from the rough draft, much as a sculptor might imagine a supple human figure emerging from a marble block. (Whether done consciously or subconsciously, this is, I believe, a creative act.) With the rubric and my comments as guides, I ask them to revise for content and form, cautioning them not to worry much about editing at this stage. They will probably still be doing some shaping and rough work. The delicate stuff comes later.

After this stage or revision is completed, we spend a period grading and discussing sample papers according to the rubric. In the following period my students score and write comments on each other's revised copy in peer-response groups. By this time they have read quite a few papers. This, along with comments on their revisions, helps them move closer to that ideal paper still forming in their mind.

Now they are ready to write a semifinal copy and to edit. I am also prepared to help them individually by giving oral evaluations at my desk. Research indicates that the teacher's comments have the most impact *now*, while the students work on their papers, not after they have written final drafts. I see myself here as a sensitive audience and partner; I can give them insight into what works and what does not.

The final in-class step occurs when the semifinal copies are done. I ask them to edit each other's papers in their response groups, equipped with dictionaries and grammar books. I do not answer questions that they can find by "looking them up." (This was a tough lesson for me, the big dad, to learn—to discover that in the long run I was not helping them by being a walking reference book.) In this last step they polish and tinker and adjust. Then they write final copy, which probably means even more fine tuning.

These techniques work for my students. Since they must turn in material from all of the stages of revision for the assignment, I can see that the difference between the rough and final drafts is usually vast. I have also noticed that as the semester progresses, they not only get better at revising, but they also become firmly convinced of the need for it. They have also had the satisfaction of seeing the refined paper unfold from the rough copy. And I do not know of one student who has become schizophrenic from using this process.

Yes, There Is a Better Way: Revising on the Word Processor

By Russell Frank
Principal, Altimira Middle School,
Sonoma Valley Unified School District;
and Teacher/Consultant, UCI Writing Project

I remember the drudgery of learning how to write as a child—of painfully scratching out letter after letter with sore, tender red fingers. Meanwhile, my mind raced ahead of my hand, and, as a result, only I could interpret the scrawl left on the page. There had to be a better way.

My typing ability quickened my composing process, but revising and editing remained just as tedious. I remember the times just before a paper was due—when it was no longer worth the pain of erasing and retyping a page to clarify a vague point or argument buried in the text. There had to be a better way.

In the summer of 1982, I experienced how word processing could improve my composing and revising skills. My writing kept closer pace with my thoughts, and I no longer needed to type draft after draft, shaping my ideas on a typewriter. This technology can also improve many students' writing by making composing and revising physically less demanding.

A word processor is any type of system for typing text material into a computer and editing, changing, or correcting the text easily and efficiently. Essentially, a word processor is a computer loaded with a word processing program, written on a storage device—usually a floppy disk. With a word processor, the author discovers or creates content and shapes and edits this content while the computer holds the text in memory. The author can revise and edit his or her piece by pushing the appropriate keys. When the piece is finished, the author presses other keys to obtain a paper copy that is clean from cross-outs, inserts, carets, smudges, and deletion marks. The process is simple, legible, and immediate and leads to easier and faster writing and revision.

Word processing is a potentially powerful tool in the quest to improve student writing. In order to explain how word processing can be used to help students, I would like first to review the characteristics of competent and incompetent student writers. Research shows that competent writers generally write longer essays, spend more time on writing tasks, and pause more often to reflect on their writing. Competent writers also revise their texts while rereading them and are far more concerned with planning, more aware of audience, and more considerate of purpose and stylistic concerns of an assignment than incompetent writers are. Competent writers also view revision as restructuring of content and ideas. These characteristics reflect the high degree of commitment competent writers feel for their writing.

Incompetent writers generally are concerned too soon during their writing with form and mechanics and, therefore, spend less time developing the content of their piece. They try to "follow the rules" of writing in an attempt to make their first draft their final draft. Incompetent writers view revision as a patchwork—of getting what was written worded correctly and of correcting mechanics and spelling. These writers, according to Sheridan Blau, are deficient in two dimensions of writing and revising: an affective dimension that includes commitment and a cognitive dimension that includes detachment. Incompetent writers generally have a low sense of commitment to their writing because (1) they do not value the piece's importance; or (2) they do not believe in their ability to complete the writing task. They also usually lack detachment from their writing—an ability to step back from their piece and view the content from a reader's point of view.

The word processor can help students to improve their writing in both the affective and cognitive dimensions of writing and revision by making the writing act easier, faster, and more efficient. Word processing enhances the affective dimension by increasing the student's faith in his or her ability to complete the writing task. Additions, deletions, substitutions, and the reordering of words, phrases, sentences, and paragraphs can be executed immediately without cluttering the page or necessitating the recopying of an entire text. This power for immediate revision is the word processor's greatest power, because students are freed from early concerns regarding correctness and form. Students learn that they can make editing corrections as well as reshape entire paragraphs late in the process with the same ease that they made earlier modifications. With the teacher's nurturing and coaching, writing becomes a mode of discovery of thought and meaning—of creating and developing content—what Sondra Perl labels retrospective structuring.[1] By understanding the characteristics of competent writers, teachers can encourage and foster those characteristics in incompetent writers, using word processing as a budge toward competence. I have seen a child move from total rejection of writing to intense interest and involvement within a few weeks of being introduced to the word processor. Clearly, that child's ability, desire, and commitment to complete a writing task increased with the mechanical advantages of the computer.

To develop the cognitive dimension of writing and revising, the word processor can also be used in conjunction with peer response groups, which encourage detachment from a piece of writing in order to see an audience's point of view. During small-group interaction students read their work to each other to obtain feedback on its effectiveness.

> *For word processing to have a significant impact on the quality of student writing, teachers as well as students must internalize what is meant by revision—that it is not just copying over or correcting mechanical errors but reseeing and reshaping an intended message for an audience.*
>
> RUSSELL FRANK

My own observation of writing response groups without accessibility to a word processor indicated that, even after successful group interaction, many students failed to incorporate their classmates' suggestions in their second drafts, probably because it was too much bother to write the extra text needed to clarify a point. With electronic editing such revisions become simple and quick. Instead of taking home an essay to revise overnight, students can obtain some feedback from their groups, incorporate the suggestions in the essay, and often obtain a paper copy within the same class period. By allowing students to incorporate peer feedback immediately, the word processor assists the writer in seeing his or her work from the perspective of a reader. As this concept of audience broadens, the student may gain enough critical distance (or detachment) to begin to anticipate how the reader will respond or, better yet, to plan his or her writing to manipulate the reader's response.

The teacher plays a major role in helping students achieve enough detachment to revise what they have written. By writing comments in the electronic text that require clarification or explanation, teachers can encourage students to see their writing as a reader might interpret it.

For word processing to have a significant impact on the quality of student writing, teachers as well as students must internalize what is meant by revision—that it is not just copying over or correcting mechanical errors but reseeing and reshaping an intended message for an audience. A teacher's own sense of what revision is will probably have

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AUTHOR'S NOTE: In my own personal experience, I am aware of how much more I use retrospective structuring when I write with my computer. In this article, for example, each paragraph and many sentences have been restructured during my initial composing during my search for the "right" meaning. In contrast, I am less willing to experiment with ideas and text when I am composing with pen and paper.

[1] Sondra Perl, "Understanding Composing," *College Composition and Communication*, Vol. 31 (December, 1980), 369.

the greatest influence on students' attitudes and how students use word processing. For most students a human being is still a more effective motivator than a machine is. But the word processor can contribute greatly to the writing process if it is used wisely.

Yes, there is a better way!

EDITOR'S NOTE: For additional information on the use of computers in writing, see pages *8, 9,* and *59–62* in *Handbook for Planning an Effective Writing Program,* which was published by the California Department of Education in 1983.

Revising with Sentence Combining

By Jerry Judd
English Teacher, Irvine High School,
Irvine Unified School District;
and Teacher/Consultant, UCI Writing Project

Writing is one of the few communication processes that allows the communicator the luxury of revision. This can involve revision of thought, of structure, of style, of writing to an audience, and generally of writing to produce a certain effect on the reader. When one is transforming initial thoughts to print, ideas do not generally flow in an orderly, linear, well-planned manner. In fact, many writers need to generate ideas on paper in the form of fragments, jottings, and disconnected sentences before they can make composing decisions that are compatible with their purpose and their audience.

Sentence combining can be an invaluable tool in the evolution of a piece of writing from prewriting to rough draft to finished product. Teaching sentence combining is not, in itself, teaching writing; rather, it is a means of increasing a writer's options in terms of fluency, form, and correctness, enabling the writer to create his or her own style.

I have found the practice of sentence combining in my classroom to be beneficial for a variety of reasons. If sentence combining is introduced early in a writing class and practiced regularly, it can have a positive influence on the attitudes of writers, especially beginning writers. Generally, there is a built-in tension and pressure in the act of composing a piece of written text. This anxiety is often self-imposed by the writer who is struggling to "get it right" the first time around. Mina Shaughnessy points out in *Errors and Expectations* that:

> The practice of consciously transforming sentences from simple to complex structures . . . helps the student cope with complexity in much the same way as finger exercises in piano or bar exercises in ballet enable performers to work out specific kinds of coordination that must be virtually habitual before the performer is free to interpret or even execute a total composition.[1]

This practice, or prewriting, not only raises the ability of student writers to manipulate language, but it also raises the level of confidence that student writers have in their ability to manipulate language. This releases them to generate more fluent first drafts that can be reworked and polished in the later stages of composing.

Sentence combining can enhance form and correctness as well as fluency. Sentence patterns, pronoun usage, and punctuation can all be introduced and mastered through practice and problem solving. I usually begin with the first part of Charles Cooper's "An Outline for Writing Sentence-Combining Problems."[2] I write sample sentences, such as the ones below, and challenge students to combine them in as many ways as they can.

> The people on the boat asked us to come aboard.
> The boat was *alongside.*
> We sailed in the boat.
> The boat was the one *with the blue sail.*

To encourage students to experiment with language use and sentence structure, I give full credit for each variation of the initial sentences.

Once students are adept at sentence combining, I use it as a means to teach not just sentence variation and length but also style. Using the literature we study as a resource, I either select or let students choose passages that they must break down from complex into kernel or base sentences.

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[1] Mina P. Shaughnessy. *Errors and Expectations: A Guide for the Teacher of Basic Writing.* New York: Oxford University Press, Inc., 1977, p. 77. Used by permission of the publisher.

[2] Charles Cooper, "An Outline for Writing Sentence-Combining Problems," in *The Writing Teacher's Sourcebook.* Edited by Gary Tate and Edward P. Corbett. New York: Oxford University Press, Inc., 1981, p. 372.

Then they must recombine them by adding their own modifiers and clauses. As they "reconstitute" the styles of professional writers, they begin to internalize elements of successful writing through imitation.

After students are practiced in the sentence-combining technique, I turn their attention to its use in the revision of their own prose. To begin the process, I take a section from one of my own stories, which I originally wrote with short, choppy sentences and then later revised using sentence-combining techniques:

> His hair was dark, matted, and graying. It was pushed back and was shiny with hair oil. It was wavy and neatly trimmed around his ears and neck.
>
> His dark, matted, wavy hair was shiny from hair oil and neatly trimmed around his ears and neck.
>
> A newspaper was on the stool next to Spence. He picked it up after the first shot of whiskey. He read the names of writers given by-lines on the first page.
>
> After Spence downed his first shot of whiskey, he picked up a newspaper on the stool next to him and read the names of writers given by-lines on the front page.

We discuss the differences between the two versions, and we point out the changes in style created by longer, more complex sentences.

To integrate sentence combining into the revision of their own writing, I have students select an earlier journal entry or free-writing exercise that they are interested in revising. They find paragraphs, sentences, or sections from their writing which are short and choppy and need work. They pull these excerpts from their papers and experiment with revising them in a variety of ways through sentence combining. Peer groups can provide valuable feedback for the author when he or she must decide which of the new variations represents the greatest improvement over the original. These selections are then inserted in the revised version of the student's writing.

Having students make up their own sentence-combining exercises from spelling lists, vocabulary lists, or other units of study can also be done. Here is an example of part of a student-produced sentence-combining activity from an eighth grade spelling list:

Spelling List	*Student-Produced Sentence-Combining Activity*
1. sophomore	He was a wrestler
2. wrestler	He fought on Wednesday.
3. colonel	He was full of haughtiness.
4. Wednesday	She was a sophomore.
5. laboratory	She works in a laboratory.
6. haughtiness	He was an old colonel.
7. yacht	He liked sailing his yacht.
8. autumn	He sails in autumn.

After having the students do the activities described previously for several weeks, I have found that an instructional unit on the different sentence patterns can be invaluable. When I am about halfway through my sentence-combining unit, I teach students the simple, compound, complex, and compound-complex sentences over a several-week period. Once students are writing longer sentences, they want to know that their longer sentences are correct and not run-ons.

In the end perhaps the single most important criterion in teaching writing is the amount of time students spend thinking about writing. The more students write, the more they begin to think like writers. Sentence combining is an excellent teaching tool to help students gain control and confidence over their own writing. When students write often and have confidence in themselves as writers, they begin to do more offstage thinking about writing, composing, and revising in their heads before committing pen to paper. They also have more options in how to go about communicating an intended message and can consciously plan not only what they want to say but also how they can best express it. Revising, then, becomes an integral component of each stage of the writing process.

The most valuable of all talents is that of never using two words when one will do.

THOMAS JEFFERSON

Two Activities That Encourage Real Revision

By Trudy J. Burrus

Former English Teacher, El Toro High School,
Coordinator, Healthy Kids,
Saddleback Valley Unified School District;
and Teacher/Consultant, UCI Writing Project

I spend considerable time and energy each year fighting the same battles, and one that I never seem to win is the battle over rewrites. I say, "Rewrite," and somehow it is translated as "recopy." However, I have come up with a solution. It is not infallible, but it has been successful. Simply stated, I collect and keep the draft, and then I ask for a rewrite.

The reactions are what one might expect them to be. Looks of horror and disgust abound, and someone almost always cries "Foul." It is then that we discuss one more time, for the record, the variety of approaches one can make to a topic. We review voice, point of view, and methods of organization and development. I follow this discussion with an extensive precomposing phase during which I introduce a variety of topics that the students orally practice writing.

I may suggest a potentially suspenseful event to begin the discussion. One student will invariably arrange the parts of that event in chronological order while another might offer a news story account with the most important information first. Given a controversial issue, one will attempt to persuade, and one might choose to remain objective. One approach may be to begin with the least significant items; another will lead with the most important. One may support with facts; another could offer examples. The students spot avenues open to them that they would not have considered before.

Often the goal is for the writers to revise their work in essentially the same form. In this instance, the earlier draft has been a rehearsal for the purpose of blocking and pacing. When the student writers are forced to act without their original scripts, they become more familiar with their purposes and their unique messages; their rhythm becomes more even and their style more apparent. The writers move more ably within their topics, and their writing develops tones of confidence and authority.

An adjunct activity is to have one student rewrite another's paper. This exercise is especially useful for response partners. Each has a clearer understanding of the weaknesses in the other's draft and of the difficulties in handling the topic. The writer then has the benefit of a peer model when he or she begins his or her own revision. The partner's version may offer fresh ideas; it may also expose unworkable alternatives. Either way, it is helpful.

These revision activities seem to bring about the most consistent change when repeated several times early in my course and then resurrected at random intervals thereafter. Probably the greatest long-range effect is an increased opportunity for the students to gain some distance from their work. With this distance, students take command of the subject. Without it, they do not control their writing; their writing controls them.

I tell my students that to bury an idea, a sentence, or even a topic may be to give it an honorable death, and that to keep a poor draft in its flawed form is to condemn it to a life of pain and distortion. I like to draw an analogy between the revision process and an incident in which a ceramics instructor admonished me to destroy the first hundred pots I threw on the potter's wheel. He said, in effect, "To keep each pot is to treat it as your child. It is not, and you are not obligated to love it or to give it a home. Work until you create something that deserves your admiration."

Skill-Building Strategies for the Reluctant Writer

By Rebekah Caplan

Coordinator, English/Language Arts
(Kindergarten Through Grade Twelve),
Oakland Unified School District;
and Teacher/Consultant, Bay Area Writing Project

Look out. I've just discovered Raymond Carver, and I'm crazy about him. Those familiar with his writing might know what I'm talking about. In a Raymond Carver short story—within a few opening sentences—you're plunged into a scene, thrust into a situation you find a little strange but somehow familiar:

> This friend of mine from work, Bud, he asked Fran and me to supper. I didn't know his wife and he didn't know Fran. That made us even. ("Feathers")
>
> It had been two days since Evan Hamilton had stopped smoking, and it seemed to him everything he'd said and thought for the two days somehow suggested cigarettes. ("Bicycles, Muscles, Cigarettes")[1]

You feel you've stepped into someone's life, midstream; you're right in there. You read on, hypnotized by a reality you think you know, to find—by the end of the piece—nothing in particular: no messages, no morals, nothing that really strikes you other than that the story is over—just like that. But a reader comes to learn, after reading a few of Carver's stories, that this, perhaps, is the point. It just might be that you read a Raymond Carver story for the telling itself and not particularly for the ending.

And so it is with the story of my return to Foothill High School, after a three-year absence from teaching, to teach two sections of reluctant writers. This, too, is a tale told for the telling. (Whatever happened to showing?)

A few days into the semester, I'm plunged into a recognition of something strange, yet familiar; a distant reality I feel I know—what it means to be back in school. Take the first week. We've been writing. When it's time, I offer a former student's essay as a model—to push them a little—and I ask them what they think:

> "Oh, I'm shuure. You lie. You lie!"
>
> "What do you mean?"
>
> "No one at this school could ever have written that!"
>
> "What do you mean?"
>
> "No one at Foothill High School could ever write this good. You lie!"
>
> "But, I had this student several years ago. She was a student of mine."
>
> "What's her name? What's her name?" (They snap their fingers repeatedly, pressing me for a response.)
>
> "What year'd she graduate? What year'd she graduate? Tell us that. Besides, look here at the bottom of the page, it says 'Dale Seymour Publications.' This comes from a book."
>
> "Oh, OK. I understand now. I understand what you're thinking. But, what if I told you that I wrote a book, filled with the writing of Foothill High students?"
>
> "You wrote a book? You wrote a book? Oh, I'm shuuuuure."

Or take what happens a couple of days later, following my return from sick leave. Two different reports from substitute teachers are on my desk. They scream at me:

> A wild bunch. I don't envy you this class. Some kids worked, but most did nothing. No X-tra credit!
>
> About half the students just sat there. The others either worked on the assignment and/or socialized. Mike and Bob refused to do the assignment, saying they would complete it at home. Tanya turned in some homework, then left due to illness. You certainly have a challenge before you in trying to motivate these students.—Good luck!

Horrified, I read the reports out loud to my students and demand an explanation; I insist they propose some solutions:

> The way I think that you could make people be here on time is to take off points every time there late. Another thing is when you don't do your work or be quiet take off more points and if that does not work send them to the office and get them out of here and if they don't get out of high school that's their fault.
>
> I don't think you are doing anything wrong it is just this class. The class is one of people who just can't shut up.
>
> I really don't know what you should do. Maybe we should sit in alphabetical order.
>
> I think you should calm down about 50%. This is a great class. We just want to party and have a good time. Most students think that English is the worst subject except for math. I think you should listen before you start yelling at people. But I don't care. I'm trying to transfer out.
>
> I don't think the students should have to think this up. We are not the teacher, you are.

Such is the Carveresque recognition I'm talking about. No fooling around. In two short weeks I realize I'm back in school—plunged into the thick of it. It's coming back to me now; it's coming back to me. School's coming back to me. So, I pledge I won't raise my voice. They say they'll try, and we roll up our sleeves and begin.

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[1] Raymond Carver, *Where I'm Calling From: New and Selected Stories*. New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, © 1986, 1987, 1988.

I take a writing sample from everyone as a record of how they are writing at the beginning of the year. I select a sample prompt—a topic about "changes you've noticed in yourself or other people." I give them a period. Most write only a paragraph, such as the following:

> One day at about 3:00 I was going to store with my brother, and on the way their we had to drive through the plaza to get to the store and as we pass a shop on the right I saw someone getting in trouble with a police officer. The person in trouble was someone who you'd probably think would have never gotten in trouble at all.
>
> —*Daniel*

> When I moved from the valley it was hard for me. The bay area is alot bigger than where I lived before. There are alot more people than what I expected. It was real hard for me to leave Coalinga because that is where all of my friends are. When I moved up here I had no friends and everyone would make fun of me because I'm overweight. It was also harder for me to change schools because the schools in the bay area are alot harder than the ones in the valley.
>
> —*Matt*

Daniel never finished his essay; Daniel practically never finishes anything. Instead he doodles and draws, intricately and painstakingly, all over his folder, his head bent into his chest as he concentrates. Matt remains shy and and quiet, too, off by himself in a corner, red-faced if others look at him.

I decide to try some Christensen—the cumulative sentence style—to see if we can enliven the writing. I turn to Gray and Benson's *Sentence and Paragraph Modeling* (BAWP Publications) for inspiration.[2] Teaching them verb clusters—better known as *-ing* phrases—I get them writing their own. I improvise an action, a little dramatic scene, in front of the class and ask the students to observe and write, incorporating a couple of the new phrases. We put the sentences on the board:

> The teacher walked over to the door, opening it with caution, looking around for anyone in the hall.
>
> The teacher was walking to open the door, gradually walking in a strut, looking for her students.

Not bad. Not bad. I scout for volunteers to dramatize other actions. One of the rowdies sees his chance and leaps onto center stage, rotating his body in provocative moves, crossing his eyes, and sticking out his tongue; finally he settles down and begins improvising:

> He was playing marbles, shooting it, yelling out to everyone that it was a good shot. He was careful to shoot the marble, waiting until the right moment, taking a careful aim.

Getting better; getting better.

I send the class home to observe parents, friends, and interesting scenes. They incorporate more *-ing* phrases:

> He cheated on an exam very carefully, rolling his eyes in his head, looking at another person's paper. He sat there listening to the baseball game, jumping up and down when the Dodgers won!

A lot of them are getting this; they even fight over going to the chalkboard. When one student sends a yo-yo flying into another's eye, they cheer, "Let's write about that."

> The big, fat ugly dude stood in the corner, playing with his yo-yo, flying everywhere, hitting Louie.

We start switching parts around, putting *-ing* phrases in different places:

> Standing in front of the room, playing with his beginners yo-yo, he makes a fool of himself while we get credit for writing about his performance.

Next, I steer them toward magazines and books, challenging them to spot verb clusters in their reading:

> In the book *The Different Drum*, M. Scott Peck, M.D., talks about the victims of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, describing them walking the streets after a blast, dragging their own skins behind them. (*Omni* magazine, October, 1988)
>
> A few of the passengers glanced up from their food, hesitating, waiting, almost listening for the next roll, smiling nervously, little secret glimmers of apprehension in their eyes. (*Dip in the Pool*, by Roald Dahl)

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[2] James R. Gray and Robert Benson, *Sentence and Paragraph Modeling*. Berkeley: Bay Area Writing Project Publications, 1982.

I'm elated. Elegant phrases adorn the chalkboard; lively language fills the room. I throw in some sentence combining (using *The Writer's Options* as a resource), and we try past participles and absolutes—definitely tricky—but they give it a go, and Daniel really finds his niche.[3] Taking the telling sentence "He was the picture of health" and turning it into a showing paragraph, Daniel writes:

> Dressed in a Gold's Gym skin tight tank top and black spandex shorts, the 93 year old man lay on his back, looking up at the huge dumbell above him. He extended his saggey arms upward and gripped the iron bar firmly. Then, taking a deep breath, he gave it all his might, lifting the 375 pound dumbell inches above its holders, blowing out the breath he used to get it up there. Just as he thought he'd lower it to his chest his elbows gave away, and snapped back the opposite way they bend. Down came the 375 pound weight, crushing his neck and throat and spinal cord. The old man lay there with the weight across his neck, mouth and eyes wide open. He was killed in an instant.

"Cool," the class responds as I read aloud "Killer." They're on a roll, so I press on. Stealing an idea from Stan Pesick, a history teacher at Oakland's Skyline High School, I distribute colorful postcards and ask students to select favorites and write descriptions of what they see. Matt chooses a photograph of a motorcycle rider.

> He stands there, combing his black greasy, grimy hair, acting like mister know it all, looking like a weirdo with the tattoo on his upper arm, acting like he was stuck in the 50's wave.

Daniel ropes his friend Bryan into selecting the same postcard: a picture of two young athletes—diving champions—training for the Summer Olympics. Bryan, uninvolved until now, writes:

> Springing high, the two divers train for possible meets they may be in Throwing themselves high into the air, twisting, twirling around, they dive into the pool with just a little splash. Swimming over to the side, the diver gets out and repeats the dive until he has perfected it.

In contrast, Daniel offers:

> Arms straight out, toes pointed, chin up, looking straight ahead, having no idea the 18 foot pool only had about a foot and a half of water in it, he started to bounce on the springboard to launch his body high above the ground and pull off a double McTwist into a tuck summer salt with a twisting dive entrance to the, what was supposed to be, the water. He launched, completely airbourne he started the technique. Pulling it off, he headed downward to finish it. Peircing straight through the foot and a half of water, his pointing hands hit first, snapping every bone from his fingertips to shoulders, pulling his shoulders from his socket, ripping muscle and legements and vains. His arms were like dangling ornderments. His head, next to hit, smashed all over the plastered bottom, busting out every tooth, shuving the cartiledge and bone from his nose straight into his brain, instenly killing him. With a fully fractured skull, brains and blood stained the clear small amount of water that was in the pool. He floated to the top.

Daniel, we might say, is in his element. He is hot. I've got to interview him—now. I get a pad of paper; get a tape recorder; clear my throat:

"Ahem . . . Daniel. Are you a reader? Do you like to read books?" (This kid has got to be a reader.)

"Nah. Not really."

"Really? You never really read?"

"Nah."

"How about writing? Do you like to write? Did anyone—your teachers—ever tell you you're a good writer?"

"Nah. We never really wrote."

"Really?"

"Nah. Not really."

"Does it make you feel good to know you're a good writer? I think you're a good writer."

"Uuh . . . I don't know."

I asked his previous teacher if he thought Daniel was a good writer. "I don't remember," he says. "He never did much of anything. That's why I put him in your remedial class."

Oh well. I think they have hit the big time—not just Daniel, but almost everyone. We're definitely onto something. Even after detention slips and tardy forms and earthquake drills and power failures, we have made some strides.

"You're writing as well as any college students," I gush to my students. "Don't let anyone ever convince you that you are remedial." And with

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[3] Donald A. Daiker and others. *The Writer's Options: Combining to Composing* (Fifth edition). New York: HarperCollege, 1993.

Words are like leaves; and where they most abound,
Much fruit of sense beneath is rarely found.

ALEXANDER POPE

that, I announce a writing contest. I will offer a prize for the best saturation report—a journalistic piece on an intriguing place in Pleasanton: the mall, the donut shop, the car wash, the police station. I ask them to re-create—just as they did with their postcards—the scenes that they observe.

"What's the prize?"

"Well, I was thinking about this brand new T-shirt I won in a tennis clinic, a T-shirt that is way too large for me."

"What's it say on it?"

"Prince Tennis Clinic. The T-shirt was a promotion for Prince tennis equipment."

"How about a Cal T-shirt? Yeah! You work at Cal. How about a Cal T-shirt?"

Well . . . okay!" (I'm a good sport.) "You've got it. A Cal T-shirt!"

"Wait-a-minute! How about a Cal sweatshirt?" (This is Daniel's suggestion.) Others chime in, "Yeah!!! A Cal sweatshirt! Yeah!!! We'll write for that!"

"Okay." (I'm desperate here.) "A Cal sweatshirt!"

"All right!"

In preparation for the tour about town, I assign one more practice piece, just to get them out in the world observing. I arrange for students to be out of class for 30 minutes, visiting places on campus: the attendance office, the cafeteria, the parking lot, other classes. When they return to class, they write up their descriptions. From Matt's report I get:

> I watched Joe Caruso, a freshman of course, walking through the IMC picking on people, lifting his collar on his blue and red No Yo Giants jackets, acting tough.

From Daniel's:

> The sophomore guys uncoordinatedly play the game, jumping through the air, trying to pull off air Jordan moves but missing their stunt shots.

And from Bryan's (now on a roll):

> Off in the distance, approaching rapidly, the jingle of keys from a janitors right front pocket gets near, then stops. Trying his hardest, he tries to open a jammed locker.

"Are we still doing college work?" Matt asks. "Is this still college stuff? Did you get the sweatshirt yet?"

On the day the contest papers are due, Foothill High School is in flames; the drama room is on fire, and everyone is escorted to the gym. I sit in the bleachers alone, waiting for my students to spot me and rush up all aglow, papers waving in their hands. I wait. And I wait. I see Shelly and make eye contact; she avoids my stare—quite convincingly—as if she never saw me in her life. I find Louie and snag him from the crowd. I ask him if he has anything for me.

"Have anything? The paper for the contest? A scene in Pleasanton?"

"Oh. That. Oh yeah. I forgot. Can I still make it up?"

"Never mind. Have you seen Daniel?"

"No. But I don't think he did it."

I see no more familiar faces. I am abandoned. I return to the bleachers, pouting. By the end of the period, still scrawling out words in the cradle of his arm, I find Matt, seated behind me the whole time. "I revised mine twice," he says. "Read it. It's good. Tell me if you think I have a chance to win the contest." And so I start:

> **My Observations at the Creek**
>
> As I was walking beside the rusty barbed wired fenceline, I noticed the weathered posts. The moss was growing around the rotted base from the moist grass that grew abundantly out here. Following a path down to the creek, walking through grass just beginning to turn green again, stepping over a dead branch with a few yellow leaves still clinging to it, I noticed a deerhoof imprint in the mud where the ground had still not dried from the last rain, the trees acting as a blanket, keeping the moisture in.

And I read on, and I finish:

> A big red tailed hawk was perching on a limb of a tree, watching for its prey, while its mate fed their chicks in the not to distant nest. The squirrels running around all over the broken branches again, playing

more games in the poison oak bushes. In the distance I heard a train blow its horn and it made me realize it was time to go. Walking back home, along the rusty fence I saw the fog covered mountains. The fog was hanging off of them like snow topped mountains.

EDITOR'S NOTE: We are grateful to the Bay Area Writing Project for permission to reprint this adaptation of Rebekah Caplan's article "What We Talk About When We Talk About School (Or, Would You Please Be Quiet, Please?)," which appeared in the *Bay Area Writing Project Newsletter* (May, 1989).

Learning Prose Surgery Through Given-Language Activities

By William Strong
Director, Utah Writing Project,
Utah State University, Logan

Most of us face a dilemma when it comes to teaching our students how to revise. On the one hand, we know that revising is an intensely personal activity—a basically unteachable interaction between writers and their own texts. On the other hand, we know that revising results from certain habits of mind that can be learned by most students.

Some of these "prose surgery" habits and skills are learned in response groups as students internalize questions and work toward a "felt sense" of a successful text. Others are learned through teacher-student conferences. And still others are imparted through classroom examples of revision—when, for example, we share a series of drafts and talk about why we made certain changes.

Yet in spite of our best efforts to work with prose surgery in these ways, many students may lack motivation, a conception of revising and editing, or actual skill in manipulating language. Enter "given-language" activities, a first cousin to sentence-combining exercises.

Given-language activities help students develop prose surgery habits and skills by presenting various sorts of thinking and writing problems. By solving the problems—in large groups, small groups, or individually—students learn prose surgery techniques that may prove useful as they approach their own writing.

According to Lev Vygotsky, the great Russian linguist who postulated a "zone of proximal development" in language learning, whatever learners can do in a structured context, they can eventually do on their own. This principle underlies given-language activities. In other words, such exercises provide *one* way for students to develop basic insights about revising, editing, and proofreading tasks.

A second key premise is that revising/editing exercises are always an *adjunct* to real writing, not a substitute for it. In other words, whenever given-language activities are used for large-group instruction, they should be followed up with "personal application" activities so that students apply principles of "reading with care" in workshop settings that encourage collaboration and peer response.

Adding Details and Support

Prose surgeons do more than cut away, of course. They also add details and support to existing text. This reconstructive work may involve additions of words, phrases, sentences, paragraphs, or larger chunks of text. In practicing such skills, students try to write from the reader's viewpoint, adding details and support to make the text clearer or more vivid.

A simple framework for helping students learn about details and support is shown in "Adding Details and Support." By working with such activities in small groups, students see how a bare, undeveloped paragraph can be developed further. Instead of loading individual sentences, students create new sentences that are woven into an existing text.

Reorganizing Activities

For many of us, composing is a zig-zag process, not a neat and tidy unfolding of ideas. Our resulting rough drafts reveal the random, associative quality of our thinking. Short of starting over, how can we work with such drafts?

William Strong, *Writing Incisively: Do-It-Yourself Prose Surgery.* Copyright 1991. New York: McGraw-Hill, Inc. Reproduced by permission of McGraw-Hill, Inc.

By solving the problems—in large groups, small groups, or individually—students learn prose surgery techniques that may prove useful as they approach their own writing.

WILLIAM STRONG

Presenting scrambled-sentence activities is one way to help students think about relations of meaning, particularly when small groups are given "sentence strips" to manipulate on top of their desks. Work first with easy patterns of text organization, such as simple sequencing and spatial order, before approaching more difficult patterns. Don't put too many sentences into an exercise.

Obviously, an exercise such as the one shown on "Reorganizing Practice"should be followed by class discussion. Which sentence seems to work best as an opener? Why? Which order of supporting facts makes the most sense to you as a reader? Such questions help students realize that their intuitions provide the best sources of information for revising / editing decisions about their own texts.

Trimming Sentence Flab

Many students develop the idea that "more is better" in writing. With thesaurus in hand, they replace simple, clear words with ponderous, polysyllabic ones, or they add modifiers or qualifiers to make the text sound "more intelligent" or "academic." Particularly at the high school level, they often acquire habits of padding that make text less readable.

As an antidote to this lamentable tendency, given-language exercises, such as "Trimming Sentence Flab," work well. The goal of the activity is to write incisively, cutting away the flab but not the muscle and bone of the text. Students can have fun as they work in teams, comparing their word counts with those of other teams.[1]

As students learn various approaches to tightening text, they can then work on other given-language documents—perhaps from the district office mailbag. Students may enjoy creating a "Tower of Babble" bulletin board, on which they post examples of both real-world obfuscatory prose and revised alternatives. Finally, of course, students apply their surgical skills to their own papers.

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[1] *AUTHOR'S NOTE:* This exercise also works well for teaching editing and proofreading skills. Each of the PROBLEM sentences presents typical errors in spelling, punctuation, and usage, all in context; the students mark these errors and correct them on the REWRITE line. In follow-up discussion, the teacher can clarify any misunderstandings and teach conventions that students do not yet understand.

Adding Details and Support

Play-off

Just before the final buzzer, the crowd went wild.

Why?

Expansion ______________________________

____

Cheryl muscled down a crucial rebound in the opponent's court.

What did the other players do?

Expansion ______________________________

____

With time running out, she dribbled down the sidelines towards her team's basket.

What was the crowd's reaction?

Expansion ______________________________

____

As a teammate broke into the clear, Cheryl flicked her the ball.

How did her teammate react?

Expansion ______________________________

____

Now unguarded, Cheryl looped behind the defenders and took her teammate's return pass.

What was her next move?

Expansion ______________________________

____

She released her shot with a soft touch, banking it against the glass.

What happened then?

Expansion ______________________________

____

Reorganizing Practice

Sex Education

Directions: Reorganize the following sentences by putting appropriate letters in the numbered blanks at the bottom of the exercise. As part of this reorganizing practice, focusing directly on *transition words and phrases* may be helpful. For example, note the "signal words" in the sentences on sex education that indicate one or more of the following patterns:

Spatial order _____
Time order _____
Numerical order _____
Cause / Effect order _____
Compare / Contrast order _____
General / Specific order _____

A. It is therefore not surprising that effective sex education in the home is lacking.
B. Many adult parents fear that sex education will encourage sexual activity.
C. Eighty percent of these teenage pregnancies result from premarital sex.
D. Presently, 10 percent of American women get pregnant by the age of seventeen; 25 percent, by the age of nineteen.
E. Among teenagers thirteen to eighteen, only three out of ten have had instruction about birth control in school classes.
F. Moreover, only about 30 percent of the nation's schools have programs of sex education.

1. ______________________
2. ______________________
3. ______________________
4. ______________________
5. ______________________
6. ______________________

Trimming Sentence Flab

Friday Night Concert

Directions: Read the PROBLEM sentences; then examine the sentence-combining clusters. Create REWRITE sentences to express meanings clearly. Count the words in REWRITE sentences and compare that number with the one listed after the PROBLEM sentences.

1. The auditorium was like a steam bath.
   It was sweltering.
   It was jammed with thousands of students.
   They had finished their midterm exams.
   They now wanted some Friday night excitement.

PROBLEM 1. There was an auditorium that was sweltering like a steam bath, and it was exceedingly jammed with thousands of students, each of whom had finished his or her midterm exams and now wanted some excitement on this particular Friday night. (40 words)

REWRITE 1. ______________________________

____

____

2. The students had waited for nearly an hour.
   They had sipped soft drinks.
   They had eaten popcorn.
   Now their patience was wearing thin.

PROBLEM 2. It was after a wait of nearly an hour, during which time the students had sipped a variety of soft drinks and eaten popcorn sold by vendors, that their patience was now wearing somewhat thin, to say the least. (39 words)

REWRITE 2. ______________________________

____

____

3. A chant erupted.
   It was rhythmic.
   It spread up the rows.
   It brought the crowd to its feet.
   It demanded music.

PROBLEM 3. Eventually erupting from the crowd was a chant, the rhythms of which spread up the rows toward the top of the auditorium and brought the audience to its feet where it stood and demanded music. (35 words)

REWRITE 3. ______________________________

____

____

Trimming Sentence Flab (continued)

4. Colored lights swirled through the crowd.
The chant grew in intensity.
It swelled like a bubble.
The swelling was dangerous.
The bubble might burst.

PROBLEM 4. As a really fabulous array of colored lights swirled this way and that through the crowd in the auditorium, the chant grew in intensity, swelling larger and larger like a bubble in possible danger of being about to burst. (39 words)

REWRITE 4. ______________________________

____

____

5. Then the stage exploded with light.
The stage had been darkened.
The explosion was sudden.
The light was brilliant.
The stage exploded with sound.
The sound pounded the senses.

PROBLEM 5. It was not long thereafter that the stage, which had been previously darkened, all of the sudden seemed to explode with light as well as with sound, and it was this sound that pounded the senses of the crowd. (40 words)

REWRITE 5. ______________________________

____

____

6. The crowd went wild.
It screamed with one voice.
The voice was joyful.
The voice was delirious.

PROBLEM 6. The crowd went absolutely and completely wild with incredibly awesome excitement, and its scream seemed to be with one voice that was both resonant with joy and, to put it mildly, somewhat delirious. (32 words)

REWRITE 6. ______________________________

____

____

Revising for Correctness

Some Basics That Really Do Lead to Correctness

By Irene Thomas
Sonoma State University

When many English teachers hear the word *basics*, they think of drills on grammar—drills that lead to the identification of nouns, adverbs, subjects, and so forth. When parents and the society at large call for the *basics*, however, what they usually mean is that students should be able to correct such usages as "we was" and "he done," write in complete sentences with proper punctuation and spelling, and so on. We have been led to believe by the writers of textbooks and traditional English curricula that a connection exists between these two definitions of the basics; indeed, it is assumed that a teacher's drills on grammar will satisfy society's demands for correct performance. I question that assumption. In fact, I would attribute much of the so-called writing crisis in our schools to that very assumption. When drills on grammar are used as *the* means toward better writing, precious time is wasted—time that could be better spent on actual writing tasks. First, let me suggest some reasons why drills on grammar are a waste of time.

Grammar—the analysis, or parsing, of sentences—is an abstract skill. It bears little or no relationship to the production of a correct sentence. Anyone who has taught knows that children or adolescents who can locate an adverb in a sentence do not necessarily use effective or correctly formed adverbs in their writing. And the reverse is also true: Many students who write well do not necessarily perform well on standardized grammar tests. The fact is that the two skills are indeed just that—two different skills. Here are several examples of modern research that support that assertion:

1. Controlled studies attempting to link the teaching of grammar with improvement in writing ability have so far been unsuccessful.[1]

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[1] *EDITOR'S NOTE:* For specific citations on the research regarding grammar and the teaching of writing, see pages 3 and 4 of *Handbook for Planning an Effective Writing Program*, which the California Department of Education published in 1983.

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2. The work of Piaget, the prominent cognitive psychologist, strongly suggests that preadolescents are not developmentally ready for the levels of abstraction demanded in the process of parsing. (That may be why so many ninth graders come to you still not knowing what a verb is, much less a predicate.)
3. The most recent studies of right and left brain domains suggest that the tasks involved with composing are right brain tasks and those of analyzing are left brain tasks. We can at least hypothesize, at this early stage of the research, that the two kinds of skills, when taught simultaneously, may create a neurological conflict during the acquisition of writing skills.
4. Finally, from what researchers know about the acquisition of oral language, we can safely say that oral language is acquired biologically and with data provided by the normal linguistic environment. In other words, children are biologically equipped to learn a language quickly. The language spoken around them serves as the data and the input to their language *computer*. They know, for example, that *er* comparative endings are added to only one class of words. And they will add the *er* to those words predictably, even though they may not understand the term *adjective* until they are fifteen years of age.

Now you might say that oral language and written language differ considerably, even though the latter is roughly based on the former. Moreover, the special requirements of the written forms and conventions (spelling, punctuation, sentence structure) require practice—even drill. Yes, I fully agree; but it is the kind of practice needed that we should consider carefully.

All too often in the language arts, we spend our time allotted for *revising* skills on practice material that is essentially impractical. We use textbook drills on verbs or "grammar games" and then, we are led to believe, our students will write correct sentences. What tends to be missing in the process are those intermediate steps of copying, imitating, and manipulating good models. Such models, in fact, can provide the linguistic input to writing skills that is analogous to the "natural language data" necessary to oral language development. Many teachers have found that working with models tends to encourage carryover of the information conveyed in models—information about punctuation, spelling, sentence structure, verb forms—into the students' independent composing. And do not miss an opportunity to use the students' own writing as a learning tool. The idea of being "correct" takes on a new importance when a student is genuinely concerned about communicating his or her message to an audience.

Listed below are some examples of practical sentence exercises that you can use almost daily in either your prewriting activities or your warm-up to the revising stage of the writing process. They can be adjusted for any grade level. The overall objective of these exercises is to develop students' eyes and ears for identifying the correct written form of sentences. If you have students keep these exercises in a permanent notebook, you can refer to a specific exercise or specific sentence when they need to "correct" something in their independent work. In almost every case, your demonstrating an example first is enough instruction to allow students to work on their own or with a partner. Whenever possible, create examples that relate to actual people, places, and activities to capture the interest of your class. Use the sentence exercises to reinforce the curriculum you are teaching. Most teachers have found that when they integrate the basics with other content areas and present them as they occur naturally in written expression, the need for grammatical terminology is substantially reduced—even eliminated. The following are some practical exercises that may be especially appropriate for LEP and remedial students:

1. Copying a sentence or two from the chalkboard or from a specific passage in a text. What could be more basic? (These can later serve as models to imitate, as in exercise 2.)
2. Replacing a word or phrase in a sentence with some other word or phrase—also a very practical way to recycle a spelling list.

   Jill sat on my **hat**.

   We won the competition because of our **tremendous** speed.
3. Unscrambling a scrambled sentence to produce a real sentence.

like We boats. to sail (Punctuation and capitalization clues can be dropped later.)

are faster than he and I Harry (three possibilities)

A series of these scrambled sentences with pronouns helps to establish the relationship between form and position.

4. Replacing nonsense words with real words.

   The **tizz** is **mimming** in the **fass**.

   The **tizzes are mimming** in the **fass**.

   The **tizz mims timly**.

   The **tizzes mimmed** yesterday.

   This kind of exercise focuses attention on structural clues and subject-verb agreement.

5. Changing declarative sentences into negations, questions, or imperatives. (Again, you can recycle spelling words.)

6. Using the sentence machine. Make a sentence by choosing one word from each column, as in the examples below. Then repeat the process and make as many other sentences as you can.

They	made	the	same	game
We	ate	a	eight	cages
Ray		an	late	lunches

Because	I	were	late	we	were	punished.
Since	we	was	sick,	I	took	medicine.
Although	they		obedient,	they	was	

7. Mixing and matching (subjects and predicates) to produce as many sentences as possible.

Those girls		was naughty.
Henry	+	is silly.
My cat		are my friends
		were away today.

8. Punctuating sentences in discourse.

   Reproduce any series of sentences, or a paragraph, from a text everyone has (eliminate capitalization and punctuation). Read the sentences aloud so that students can associate punctuation with intonation clues. Then ask them to proof and correct the copy. Finally, let the students compare their corrected versions with the original text.

9. Writing sentences, later whole paragraphs, from dictation. At any grade level, read a passage from a common text and then compare with the original to allow for self-correction.

10. Playing the "why" game (invented by Frank O'Hare). This game both teaches and reviews mechanics. Have students look at a paragraph in the text they have. Begin by asking a question about a specific use of punctuation or capitalization; e.g., "Why is there a period after the word 'time'?" The student who answers correctly may then ask a similar question of the class and so on. You can provide the answer when students cannot.

11. Expanding the world's shortest sentence. This technique works well in grades four and above to help students develop a sense for the two-part structure of the English sentence. The terms *subject* and *predicate* can be added, if you wish, once the students can easily perform the tasks involved.

    Children/play. Have students add one word at a time to each part of the sentence, always keeping it a real sentence. You can write their suggestions on the chalkboard, always retaining the line between subject and predicate. You can invite prepositional phrases (treating them as single word adverbials) by asking the questions beginning with *where, when,* and *how*.

If you are concerned about the recognition of predicates on standardized examinations, you can point out that the second part of a sentence almost always begins with a verb (a word that can take past tense). To draw attention to helping verbs, you can follow up the original exercise by demonstrating the variations of *play*—played, have played, are playing, will play, and so forth—all of which have a time dimension. The reverse of this whole process, perhaps most appropriate to upper grades, is the paring down of an expanded simple sentence to its barest essentials. This is a most practical way to aid the conceptualization of subject/predicate.

Sentence Combining

Sentence combining deserves our special attention as the ultimate example—in my estimation—of both "basic" and "potential" sentence exercises. Used most often at the elementary level, sentence combining is still a good source of sentence modeling for secondary students at all age and ability levels. As you probably know, it is built on the generative principle that every compound or complex sentence is derived from two or more simple sentences. Thus,

> Sally and I had planned to go out on Henry's sailboat, but the rain stopped us.

is a sentence resulting from the combination of:

> Sally had planned to go out on the boat.
> I had planned to go out on the boat. (and)
> The boat belongs to Henry. (')
> The rain stopped us. (, but)

All the ideas were retained and preserved in one sentence by applying the combining words *and* and *but* and by the use of the possessive. (Most teachers choose to model the resulting sentences before asking students to create their own.) Notice what a practical way this is to review the source of the possessive apostrophe and to see how overuse of certain combining words can be readily seen. When applied to students' own choppy sentences, sentence combining can reveal alternative methods of making more fluent sentences. Applied to overloaded sentences—also drawn from student writing—it facilitates reducing a sentence to its basics and then recombining or slimming down into several sentences.

Here are a few of the many sentence errors which can be addressed with sentence-combining activities:

a. **Fragments beginning with adverbial conjunctions**

These combining words (I like to call them "because" words since they all behave exactly like *because*) are just that: they connect two complete sentences that are related. If students have practice uncovering the original sentences and the combining word in model sentences or sentences from student writing, they have a better chance of catching those combining words—and potential fragments—in their own writing. Words like *because, since, although* can begin a sentence that is the result of combining two simple sentences:

> The NASA budget has been cut.
> The space program has beerr reduced. (Because . . .)
> resulting sentence: ***Because*** *the NASA budget has been cut, the space program has been reduced.*

When students associate words like *because* with a class of combining words, they are less likely to make fragments beginning with those words. If you wish, you can suggest the combining word or process to be used by putting it in parentheses, as I have above. Students should notice that *because* words can appear either initially or medially in a sentence.

b. **Parallelism errors**

We all remember too well those drills on correcting unparallel words and phrases and the parts-of-speech lessons that were supposed to clarify the problem. Sentence combining is far more efficient here too, in that it encourages a mind-display of the underlying sentences from which the parellel items originated.

> They were determined to get there early.
> They were determined to **have** a good time.
> They were determined to **arrive** home safely. (and)
> resulting sentence: *They were determined to get there early, have a good time, and arrive home safely.*

c. **Pronoun case**

It is apparent that our teachers did a good job drilling us on the nominative *Johnny and I*. As a result, even highly educated speakers may use *I* as an objective pronoun in a construction such as *They loved the present from Johnny and I*. Perhaps the rule learned was: "When in doubt, say *I*!"

Notice how sentence combining clears up the mystery:

> They loved the present.
> It was from Johnny.
> It was also from me. (and)

d. **Relative clauses and appositives**

Relative clauses, both restrictive and nonrestrictive, are natural in students' speech; but when students write, they often overlook the fluency that structure adds to their sentences. If you select choppy sentences from students' writing that could be improved by combining with a relative pronoun, you have the perfect material to work with. Additionally, the question of whether to use *that* or *which* can be addressed in this context, as well as when *who* is more appropriate than *that* in referring to human subjects.

Notice how sentence combining clarifies the identity of the referents and displays the multiple possibilities:

Marge is the oldest member of a family. (who)

This family came to America on the *Mayflower*. (who, that, which)

Marge now teaches new Americans to read English.

one resulting sentence: Marge, who is the oldest member of a family that came to America on the *Mayflower*, now teaches new Americans to read English.

reducing to an appositive and a noun phrase: Marge, the oldest member of a *Mayflower* family, now teaches literacy to new Americans.

e. **Run-on or overloaded sentences**

Many students, of course, tend to the opposite extreme and that is to overload sentences with clauses tied together loosely by *and* or *and then*, rarely showing the causal or qualifying relationships that other combining words would afford. (This sentence may itself be a good example—would it be improved by creating two sentences or two clauses with a semicolon?)

An obvious use of sentence combining with overloaded sentences is to:

1. Break them down into their underlying simple sentences. (This exercise can be done by the class as a whole or in groups.)
2. Decide which components could be meaningfully combined.
3. Rewrite to create several well-formed sentences, making note of which combining words students chose.

f. **Misunderstanding of sentence punctuation such as the semicolon**

When students see the semicolon as just one possible device to combine related, complete sentences, they will have something concrete to guide them in revising for punctuation.

Marge is known for her commitment to literacy.

She teaches English to new Americans. (;)

When performed in the context of essay revision, sentence combining becomes a process embedded in a process. And it is a concrete process that you can refer to when pointing out the need for sentence revision and for correctness. Not to be overlooked is the fact that sentence combining requires that students see, manipulate, and model complete sentences at all stages.

For more details about sentence combining, see the works of Frank O'Hare[1] and William Strong[2], as well as the commentaries by William Lomax and Jerry Judd in this volume. For students who use word processing, you may want to introduce "activity files" based on sentence combining. (See, for example, the You Are the Editor series, published by Humanities Software, Hood River, Oregon.)

In conclusion, I offer two suggestions to those teachers who agree that the approaches I have described are both basic and sound alternatives to traditional grammar:

1. If your school district uses standardized examinations, ask for a periodic review and evaluation of these examinations. If their measure of writing ability is limited to the skill of identifying subject and verb, press for the elimination of such examinations. A district-made test that uses the kinds of tasks described above, combined with a writing sample, will provide much sounder indices of a student's writing ability.
2. If your district and community insist that grammar be taught somewhere in the curriculum, press for the creation of an elective course in grammar at the high school level. Such a course, highly recommended to students studying foreign languages or preparing for college, can be designed for pure grammar instruction as an intellectual exercise. We all know that a course like this taught by someone who is enthusiastic about parsing and diagramming can be great fun as well as a rewarding challenge.

In these ways we will be "putting grammar in its place," doing no one a disservice, and realizing our mutual priorities at a time when our profession is being called on to do so.

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[1] Frank O'Hare, *Sentence Combining: Improving Student Writing Without Formal Grammar Instruction.* Urbana, Ill.: National Council of Teachers of English, 1973.

[2] William Strong, *Sentence Combining: A Composing Book.* New York: Random House, Inc., 1983. (Also see William Strong, *Creative Approaches to Sentence Combining.* Urbana, Ill.: National Council of Teachers of English, 1986 and William Strong, *Writing Incisively: Do-It-Yourself Prose Surgery.* New York: McGraw Hill, Inc., 1991.)

Practical Ideas on Revising for Correctness

Making Correctness Creative: The "Snurdles" Project

By Sandra Barnes

English Teacher, Vista High School, Vista Unified School District; and Teacher/Consultant, UCI Writing Project

As English teachers we are usually required to teach grammar because, supposedly, it will help students write better. However, research indicates that a knowledge of grammar has very little effect on how well students write. Despite these data, most public schools still give instruction in grammar. With that in mind, I tried in my "Snurdles" project to bring the teaching of grammar and writing together. I postulated that if students were challenged to apply what they knew about grammar in their own compositions, then correctness could be a creative enterprise that would foster long-term editing abilities.

I was inspired to make correctness creative by a set of posters called "Snurdles," published by the Perfection Form Company.[1] The set tells a short funny story, with each poster emphasizing one part of speech. I thought it would be educational and entertaining to have students create their own posters illustrating the parts of speech.

I use the original "Snurdles" posters as models for the students. They read the posters and use them as points of departure to create their own characters and stories. After providing a working definition of the parts of speech, I ask the students to work in groups of six to collaborate on a "Snurdles" project.

Each group decides on a character and a series of events or adventures for their story. Each student in the group writes one paragraph that emphasizes one part of speech. The whole group then reviews what has been written and polishes the writing to provide transitions and continuity between the parts. When the story is finished, each paragraph and its part of speech are written and illustrated on posters. The entire group is responsible for the correctness of the finished product.

When working on this unit, I have the students do most of the writing in class with their groups. I move among the groups giving help and advice and monitoring their progress. Usually, the project takes about five class periods. I give each student two letter grades—one for his or her contributions to the group and one for the individual poster.

I have found that students enjoy this project and have much greater success in identifying parts of speech in their own work than in isolated examples written by someone else. Because the students are applying grammatical knowledge to their own writing, they become more aware of when and where parts of speech are used in sentences. The need for transition to build in continuity is also important in the project and helps students in future writing assignments. Overall, the project can positively affect the students' attitudes toward grammar as well as their aptitudes for using parts of speech appropriately in their own writing.

The following is a sample of an eighth grade group's "Snurdles" project, as written by the students and with the parts of speech underlined by the students:

Close Encounters of the Itchy Kind

NOUNS

This is a story about a poor canine named Butch, who had a terrible personal problem. Well, you see, he had a flea family of who knows how many living in his fur. They began "living in" Butch, well, his fur that is, last summer while he was at an annual flea market. Now there are millions of them infested in Butch. Butch had gone so crazy because of these fleas that he had even tried to get an exterminator to exterminate him. He figures that if he jumps in a pool, he will drown all of these fleas and that will be the end of this "itchy" ordeal!

ADJECTIVES

All of a sudden the little fleas saw a mean looking dog named Butch, running toward a deep pool. The tiny fleas decided to try to build a giant ark very quickly. They spent all of the long day chopping down big thick trees (his thick hair) and trying to put their huge ark together. The big ark had five little rooms—one for Mr. and Mrs. Fleaster, one for little Fleapé, one for baby Flease, and one for their pet tick, Toc. They all got in the large ark, when suddenly a huge tidal wave came. They all started screaming loudly and they started floating faster and faster to who knows where.

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[1] *NOTE:* The address for the Perfection Form Company is 100 North Second Ave., Logan, IA 51546; telephone 800-831-4190.

INTERJECTIONS

As the fleas jumped on the ark, there was noise and excitement. Everyone was yelling things back and forth. As baby Flease walked aboard the ark, she yelled, "Yippee! This is fun." Then a huge wave came upon the ark, and Fleapé exclaimed, "Hey! I am getting seasick." Later, Mrs. Fleaster sat down and yelled, "Yea! This is great." But as soon as Mr. Fleaster looked on the deck of the ark, he screamed, "Ugh! There is a leak." Five minutes later Grandma Fleaster slowly started walking toward the ark and said, "Nuts! I'm still hungry," in a very screechy, high voice. Following her, baby Flease yelled, "Hey! Wait for me." A few minutes later everyone was on board, and all were happy till Mr. Fleaster saw a big waterfall close by. (The waterfall was really some water going down into the jacuzzi from the pool.)

VERBS

As the fleas sailed down the waterfall, sudden panic fell over all the Fleaster family. Flease, one of the fleas in the Fleaster family, lost her hat. The hat glided into the big ocean lying before her. One of the fleas was chatting to another about new hairstyles. They probably did not realize what danger they soon would be facing. I think they started to get the hint when they were submerged in water from their little tiny toes to their teeny little arms. I imagine the fleas at least felt safe when they reached the bottom of the waterfall.

PREPOSITIONS (PHRASES)

Then, all of the sudden, there was another big tidal wave. The flea ark was floating in the violent sea for what seemed like hours. The four little fleas and their pet "tick," Toc, were becoming very seasick. Mr. Fleaster saw a drop in the water. They were coming to another waterfall. Down the falls went the flea ark into a giant whirlpool. They started in a big spin.

CONJUNCTIONS

The fleas were jumping and falling all over the place. They were stunned by the whirlpool, for it was spinning and turning around and around. The fleas were going down and down. Finally, the spinning stopped (because the jacuzzi, which they were in, was turned off), but the fleas didn't stop spinning.

PRONOUNS

The flea family's ark was drenched from going through the whirlpool. Flease got dizzy. She was sick to her little flea stomach. They saw only misty and slightly foggy weather. Suddenly a light shone. They realized it was the sun shining. Then they emerged from the wet wonderland. Slowly rising out of the water they all rejoiced. After rejoicing, father flea was very tired and ordered them all to bed.

ADVERBS

The storm and the whirlpool quickly put the fleas to sleep. Unknowingly, the fleas slept through 43 days of their terrifying adventure. Suddenly, they awoke. Almost immediately, Mr. Fleaster got up and carefully started searching the worn boat. He went outside. He felt a tingling sensation throughout his body. Sometime in the night they had peacefully sailed to the top step of the pool. The Fleaster family quickly hopped onto the cement which enclosed the pool. They eagerly went looking for a new home and found it on a nearby rose. Now, the Fleaster family and their pet tick, Toc, were saved and joyfully lived happily ever after!

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Teaching Correctness with Competition Day

By Russell Frank
Principal, Altimira Middle School,
Sonoma Valley Unified School District;
and Teacher/Consultant, UCI Writing Project

I know my students need to master the conventions of written English, but I have always dreaded the task of teaching them. In every lesson it seemed as if I were dragging a group of tug-of-war opponents through the mire.

"Well, class, today we are going to study the use of the comma in setting off an introductory dependent clause." When you make a statement like that to a group of courteous students, you are probably greeted with a combination of yawns and blank stares. In my eighth grade classes, the moans of pain remind me of milking time at the dairies in Chino. However, because of Competition Day, the thought of teaching correctness now excites me. It is fun watching "terminally cool" eighth graders leap from their seats in their enthusiasm to answer questions.

Competition Day is designed around a game format that encourages class participation in learning through the following :

1. High interest through competition (especially effective at the middle and high school levels)
2. Immediate knowledge of results
3. Success according to level of difficulty (game can be individualized to ensure success for each student)

In addition, Competition Day encourages discussion in small groups. In essence you will be using the students in your classroom as teachers.

At some time we have all made the mistake of asking a class a question and immediately picking one person to answer it, without allowing time for thinking. Meanwhile, the other students in class have stopped thinking about the question because a classmate has already been singled out. Thus, this practice minimizes effective learning. In Competition Day, on the other hand, everyone is responsible for answering a question and earning points for his or her respective team.

To start the competition, you must have first introduced a correctness skill: the use of commas, appositives, difficult spelling words, capitalization rules, and so forth. The necessary materials include an overhead projector, chalkboard space, chalk, scorekeeper, and a set of small numbered cards. You divide the class into groups of between four and eight members, depending on the size of your class and the number of teams you wish to have. Assign a number to each person on each team. If you have four teams competing, you will have four people from opposing teams with the same number. Each player must have a sheet of paper and pencil and must answer each question. This paper is turned in at the end of the game, and you can review the paper to check a student's mastery of a particular skill.

Basically, students compete against students who have the same number on the other teams. This allows you to group students according to ability levels if you wish to do so. Highly skilled or highly competitive students can all be given the same number and, thus, will compete against each other. In like manner less skilled or shy students can be given the same number.

After assigning numbers, I may ask the teams to punctuate or capitalize a sentence properly. I dictate the sentence or use an overhead projector to display it. As the students are writing their answers, I draw a numbered card (1–4 or 1–6, depending on the number of players on each team), and anticipation mounts. Nobody knows what number I will call. Finally, I read the number.

At this point, I can ask all those people who have the number to give their answers orally or write them on the chalkboard. Another option is to have them hold up their papers, which I can check at their desks. Correct answers earn a point for that person's group; incorrect answers receive no score.

In a variation of the game, I ask a question and have each group come to consensus regarding its answer. This option is especially useful when I ask the students to do higher-level thinking, such as composing sentences that contain certain grammatical structures. Group discussion also provides students with opportunities for evaluation. In doing sentence combining, for instance, I ask my

285

students to select the most effective sentence combination written by group members. These can be displayed on the chalkboard and compared with sentences chosen by other teams. When the competition comes to a close, I tally up the scores of each group and pronounce a winner.

Although Competition Day can be used in any content area, I have had success in using the approach to reinforce skills in punctuation, capitalization, spelling, grammar, vocabulary, and sentence combining. Using this game to help my students gain mastery over correctness skills has kept student motivation high when it usually ebbs. I no longer feel as if I am having to drag my students through a mire of tedium. By making a game of the learning of the conventions of written English and holding students responsible for each other's success, I have enjoyed cooperation and enthusiasm instead of a tug-of-war.

Creative Practice with Sentence Patterns

By Laurie Opfell

Former English Teacher, Irvine High School;
and Teacher/Consultant, UCI Writing Project

Can working with sentence structure patterns positively influence students' writing? I think it can if it is presented in a way that is motivating, interesting, and meaningful.

In my mind nothing is less relevant or duller for students to do than completing work sheets on commas or parts of speech. Having students correct errors in punctuation and grammar or work sheets rarely results in fluent, error-free writing because students cannot make the connection between such isolated exercises and their own prose. However, certain activities do help students transfer what they learn in manipulating sentence structures to writing in more practical ways. First, however, you have to put away the books and work sheets on grammar.

After taking this important step, inform your students in understandable terms exactly what it is they are learning. Too often, the grammatical language alone will hopelessly confuse them. The accompanying chart contains a list of patterns I give my students to learn, and they have found the patterns workable and clear. Next, it is important to stimulate the students mentally so that as they practice and apply the patterns, their interest and motivation is high. Finally, ensure that they transfer what they learn in practice to "real" writing. Two activities that I use to help my students get interested and learn to make that transfer are described in the paragraphs that follow.

After presenting to my students a pattern such as *N-V, and N-V,* I write it on the chalkboard and give examples of sentences in which the pattern is used. For example:

> Fred chased the dog, and Alice followed.

Then I show the students slides so that they will have subjects for their writing.[1] I usually get prepackaged sets of slides from the library; art slides are good for creating interest and discussion, but vacation slides can also be used. After I show a slide, I give my students approximately a minute to write a sentence that fits the pattern and is based on the slide. I also encourage creativity by involving the students in imagining and predicting. For example, if I show a slide of a door in a wall, I might ask my students to imagine what is going to come suddenly through the door.

As I show each new slide, I usually walk around the room and monitor the activity. This is a very friendly activity; the students suggest ideas to each other, react to the pictures, laugh, and come up with wild ideas; yet at the same time they must concentrate because I change the slides every minute or two.

As I show the slides, I also change sentence patterns. After showing ten or more slides for the *N- V, and N- V* pattern, I may ask the students to add three adjectives and one adverb to the pattern, or I may introduce a completely new pattern. To avoid having this exercise become routine, one should have diversity both in slides and in sentence patterns.

A good way to end the class session is to have students exchange papers and check each other's

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[1] If slides are difficult for you to secure or use, this activity also works well with a set of magazines. Having a picture to view seems to make the activity easier for students.

Chart of Some Sentence Patterns*

Pattern (N=noun, V=verb)	Grammatical term	Use
(Compound) N-V, and N-V. N-V and V.	Coordinating conjunctions	and, but, or, for, nor, yet
(Complex) While N-V, N-V. N-V while N-V.	Subordinating conjunctions	while, if, as, because, since, so, when, until, etc.
N-V; however, N-V. N-V; N, however, N.	Transitions Connectors	however, moreover, whereas, thus, on the other hand, etc.

*This chart was adapted from material prepared by Catherine D'Aoust, a Teacher/Consultant in the UCI Writing Project and the author of material appearing elsewhere in this book.

sentences for correct structure and other matters. This activity provides each writer with an audience and also helps reinforce the lessons on structure and the punctuation associated with each pattern. Later, it will be important to ask the students to use the patterns in some kind of writing. It does not necessarily matter whether you have them write a paragraph for the purpose of using several patterns or whether you have them make the patterns part of a rubric for an assignment. The important thing is to emphasize that the *purpose* of working with patterns is to give variation and correctness to the writing, an outcome that leads to the development of comprehensible, interesting papers.

Another activity that helps students make the transfer from practice to "real writing" is to have them use specified structures in letters to each other. As with the previous activity, show the students a sentence pattern, give examples, and then have the students select a partner. At the top of the paper, each partner writes Dear *(his or her partner's name)*. Then each one writes a sentence that follows the pattern and that could logically be found in a letter. (Sometimes, a connector sentence will be necessary.) For example, if the pattern is *N-V: N*, then the beginning of the letter might be:

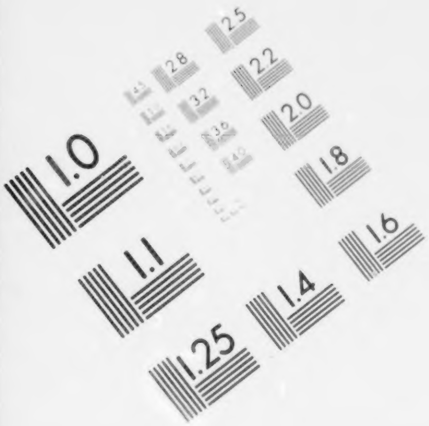
> Dear Lisa,
>
> Hi, how are you? Please come to the party tonight, and bring the following: Cokes, candy, and chips.

After each partner has started the letter using a pattern, have the students exchange letters and write a reply using the same or another pattern. They should keep following the pattern and switching back and forth until they have finished their dialogue. This activity is especially good to use as a test or a review because your students should be able to write a very coherent letter and still effectively use eight to ten patterns.

As with the activity involving slides, this letter-writing activity is also fun and motivating. As you walk around the classroom, you get an unusual glimpse into how students spend their time and what they consider important. After all, note writing is a popular and naturally relevant activity for them anyway. When the students are finished with the activity, I usually ask for several volunteers to read their letters to the class. The students respond with interest and a great deal of humor.

If sentence manipulation is taught in the manner I have described, students can be creative while they practice a variety of grammatical patterns. Instead of filling in the blanks or responding to meaningless drills, students are generating authentic writing for an audience. The transfer from practice to written communication has already been made! Finally, these activities are fun and inexpensive to implement; they can be used in grades seven through twelve; and they motivate students to learn.

> *An effective writing program builds on students' interests and on their reading and oral language experiences.*
>
> HANDBOOK FOR PLANNING AN EFFECTIVE WRITING PROGRAM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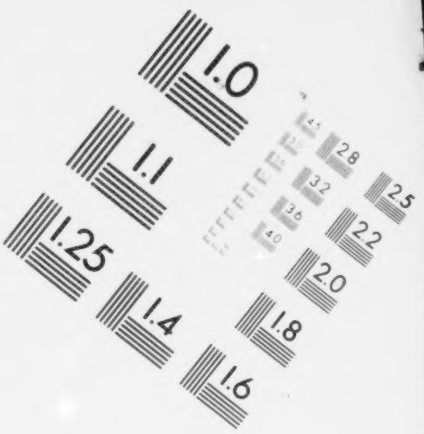
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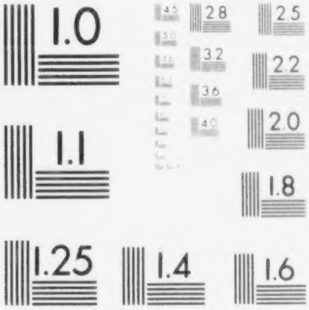
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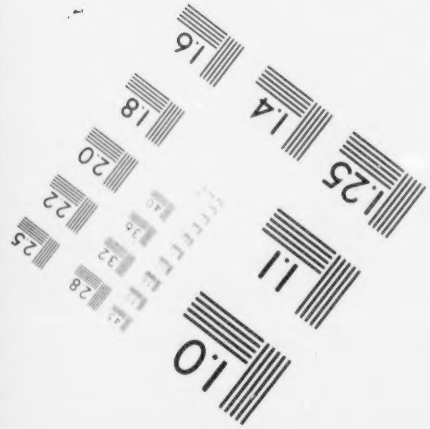
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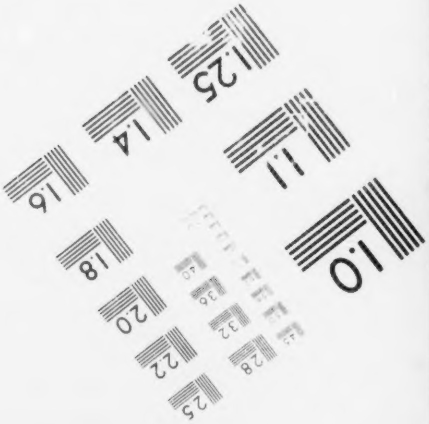
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Building Vocabularies

Word-Sprouting: A Vocabulary-Building Strategy for Remedial Writers

By Barbara Morton
Former English Teacher, Villa Park High School,
Orange Unified School District;
and Teacher/Consultant, UCI Writing Project

Gabriele Rico coined the term *clustering* to describe a writing warm-up exercise that she developed as a result of her research at Stanford University in right brain functioning. Briefly, clustering is a formalized kind of brainstorming. The writer encircles a nucleus word, such as *blue* in Figure 1, and arranges the words he or she associates with the nucleus word in a free-form diagram around the nucleus. (For more information on the clustering technique, see Dr. Rico's essay in the "Prewriting" section that appears near the beginning of this book.)

Dr. Rico's research indicates that through the process of clustering, writers, particularly those at the remedial level, can generate a network of related thoughts from the nucleus word; i.e., clustering assists them in writing coherent paragraphs. Visualizing the relationships between the nucleus word and its satellites helps these students organize their thinking, eliminate nonessential elements, and write in an orderly, systematic manner. It is particularly useful as an alternative to outlining for students who have difficulty developing their thoughts sequentially. Similarly, a distant cousin of the clustering technique enables remedial writers to bypass the often counterproductive grammar lesson and deal directly with usage and word manipulation, as you will see as we examine the procedure of word-sprouting.

In Figure 2, which closely resembles Dr. Rico's clustering diagram, you will find an assortment of words related to the nucleus word *fool*. However, instead of random associations, the cluster is limited to inflections of the nucleus word.

Because the method of identifying inflections departs substantially from the clustering technique,

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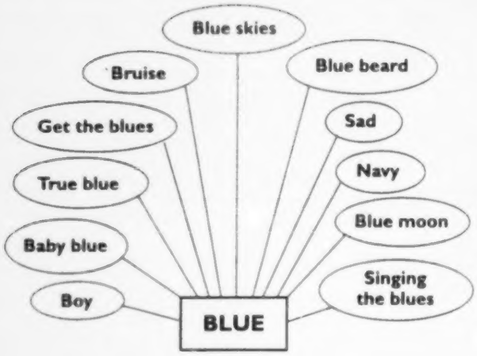

Fig. 1. The Clustering of *Blue*

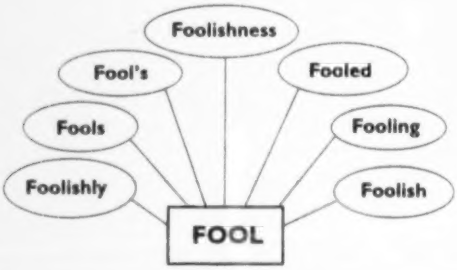

Fig. 2. Clustering with Inflections of the Nucleus Word

I have substituted the term *sprouting* for Dr. Rico's *clustering*. Language teachers, already familiar with the linguistic terms *root* and *stem*, will readily comprehend the metaphor of *sprouts*, or grammatical variations, growing from *wordseeds*.

As each sprout is labeled and classified according to its grammatical identity, the fickleness of grammar becomes apparent, as shown in the following chart:

Verbs/ Verb variations	Nouns/ Noun variations	Modifiers (adjectives and adverbs)
fool	fool	foolish
fools	fools	foolishly
fooling	(to) fool	fooling
fooled	fooling	fooled
	foolishness	
	fools	

The confusion that results from attempts at arbitrary classification might discourage the most able of students. *Fool* appears as both a noun and a verb, as does *fools*. And *fooling* is included in all three categories, because the participial form qualifies as a modifier as well.

Until the word is considered in the context of the sentence, its grammatical classification is, of course, impossible. Even then, frustrated remedial learners flounder in a morass of linguistic terminology with no improvement in their usage skills.

The word-sprouting approach abandons the traditional grammarian's approach to language and capitalizes on the student's inherent ability to distinguish the appropriate inflection of a familiar word according to its position in a spoken phrase. It is a vocabulary expansion and usage drill that deals with nouns, verbs, and modifiers without labeling them. Spared the burden of learning new definitions and assigning grammatical categories, as is often the procedure in standard vocabulary lessons, the student concentrates on the usage that "sounds right" for a given problem structure.

To introduce this exercise, the teacher generates a diagram of sprouts from a familiar word on the chalkboard or transparency as the class spontaneously provides them, adding new forms of the seedword. Before assigning the written segments of the exercise, the teacher must determine that the diagram includes an exhaustive list of sprouts. With speakers of substandard English, it may also be necessary to repeat the words with appropriate examples: "We don't say, 'I fooling you,' we say, 'I ______?' "

Even though the word may be familiar, it is also important for the class to decide on a working definition. Remedial students often have a great deal of difficulty arriving at simple definitions, particularly if they are not allowed to use a form of the word to phrase the definition.

Next, using the completed diagram of sprouts, students work with a partner to select the most appropriate sprout for use in carefully structured sample sentences. Allowing them to complete the exercise aloud with a partner reinforces aural perception and provides an opportunity for peer involvement.

In the final phase of the exercise, students are expected to write original sentences, developed from a list of words and phrases that incorporate

The word-sprouting approach capitalizes on the student's inherent ability to distinguish the appropriate inflection of a familiar word according to its position in a spoken phrase.

BARBARA MORTON

the sprouts in a variety of syntactic problems. They are allowed to use the sample sentences as models, and they may refer to a set of sentence-grading criteria that will later be used to determine their letter grades. Although they are expected to work independently, a peer-evaluation session in which students read their sentences aloud to one another allows them to correct errors before submitting their papers for final grading.

The teacher's use of the grading criteria allows for a rapid, "no surprises" return of papers. Students who score less than 89 should choose two sentences to rewrite as a follow-up.

Phase One: Word-Sprouting

The group session in which the class provides sprouts of the seedwords combines auditory, visual, and kinesthetic modes of learning. Because remedial learners need constant reinforcement in all modes, the teacher's presentation should be painstakingly thorough. In the first phase of the exercise, the teacher must help the students create the most complete word-sprout.

For example, the sprouts the group might create for the seedword *decide* are shown in Figure 3.

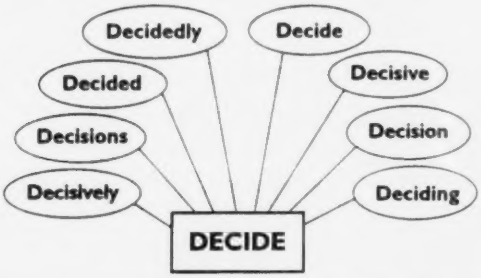

Fig. 3. Word-Sprouts of a Seedword

Even though the definition of a familiar word like *decide* may seem obvious, a brief session to arrive at a consensus is necessary before students continue with the written segments of the exercise.

Phase Two: Completing Sample Sentences

In phase two of the word-sprouting exercise, the students are asked to use the words they sprouted from the seedword *decide,* and they are given the following instructions:

- Write the most appropriate form of *decide* in the blanks provided in the accompanying sample sentences. Use each word from our word-sprout at least once.
- Say each sentence aloud to help you decide on the correct form.
- You may work with a partner. Refer to the word-sprouting diagram if necessary.

Sample Sentences

1. Louise always has difficulty making her own __________.
2. Yesterday, Louise __________ to give up the tennis team to take a job at a fast-food restaurant.
3. She had to __________ whether the money she would make was important enough to take the place of her first love, tennis.
4. "I just can't __________," she told me unhappily.
5. Louise always talks things over with me when she has trouble __________.
6. I usually __________ carefully to avoid making a mistake.
7. That is why __________ is usually easy for me.
8. Leaving the tennis team was a tough __________ for Louise.

9. Louise has never been a very _________ person; now she wants to change her mind and go back on the tennis team.
10. Coach Burns will not let favoritism be a _________ factor.
11. Having already _________ to remove her name, he's not likely to change his mind.
12. He is _________ today whether to let Louise come back on the team.
13. I hope he _________ in favor of Louise.
14. Louise just called to tell me it has all been _________.
15. Coach Burns said he _________ that he would give Louise one more chance.
16. It is _________ in the team's best interest to have Louise as a starter.

Phase Three: Writing a Sentence

In phase three of the word-sprouting exercise, the students are given a list of words and asked to create their own sentences. They are given these instructions:

- Using the words or word groups suggested below, write a sentence at least eight words long:
    1. decide
    2. to decide
    3. they decide
    4. decides
    5. Mary decided
    6. had decided
    7. having decided
    8. decision
    9. decisions
    10. deciding is
    11. is deciding
    12. Mary, deciding
    13. was decided
    14. decisive
    15. decisively
    16. decidedly
- Do not change the form of the word and do not separate or rearrange the word groups.
- You may refer to the "Sample Sentences" and the "Grading Standards for Sentences" as guidelines.

Grading Standards for Sentences

Possible score	
90–100 (Superior)	**To earn maximum points, you must show the following in each sentence:** • An understanding of the meaning of the vocabulary word. • Correct use of the form of the vocabulary word. • No spelling mistakes. • No punctuation mistakes. • Construction according to the rules of standard English. • Originality and inventive use of language.
80–89 (Good)	**This paper does not receive maximum points because of one or more of the following:** • Minor confusion about the meaning of the vocabulary word. • Mistaken use of the form of the vocabulary word. • Minor errors in grammar, punctuation, or spelling. • Little apparent effort and originality in sentence construction.
70–79 (Fair)	**This score is reserved for sentences that:** • Show uncertainty about exact meaning or use of the word in three or more instances. • Have occasional awkward grammatical constructions. • Show difficulty with internal punctuation. • Have frequent spelling errors.
60–69 (Weak)	**This score is reserved for sentences that:** • Show that the writer has little understanding of the vocabulary word. • Have abundant errors in spelling, including the word being studied. • Show elementary punctuation errors, indicating failure to proofread. • Are elementary in structure; have run-on sentences or fragments.

Sample Seedwords—High School Remedial Level

Verbs/ Verb variations	Nouns/ Noun variations	Modifiers (adjectives and adverbs)
separate	separation	separate
separates	separations	separately
separating	(to) separate	separating
separated	separating	separated
	separator	separable
obey	obedience	obedient
obeys	(to) obey	obediently
obeying	obeying	obeying
obeyed		obeyed
anger	anger	angry
angers	(to) anger	angrily
angering	angering	angering
angered		angered
create	creation	creative
creates	creations	creatively
creating	(to) create	creating
created	creating	created
deceive	deceit	deceitful
deceives	deception	deceitfully
deceiving	(to) deceive	deceptive
deceived	deceiving	deceptively
		deceiving
		deceived

Verbs/ Verb variations	Nouns/ Noun variations	Modifiers (adjectives and adverbs)
pursue	pursuit	pursuant
pursues	pursuits	pursuing
pursuing	(to) pursue	pursued
pursued	pursuing	
change	change	changeable
changes	changes	changeably
changing	(to) change	changing
changed	changing	changed
picture	picture	picturesque
pictures	pictures	picturesquely
picturing	(to) picture	picturing
pictured	picturing	pictured
analyze	analysis	analytical
analyzes	analyses	analytically
analyzing	(to) analyze	analyzing
analyzed	analyzing	analyzed
experiment	experiment	experimental
experiments	experiments	experimentally
	(to) experiment	experimenting
	experimenting	experimented

Practical Ideas for Building Vocabularies

Deceptive Definitions: Making the Dictionary a Treasure Chest

By Mindy Moffatt
English and History Teacher,
White Hill Middle School, Ross Valley School District;
and Teacher/Consultant, UCI Writing Project

The dictionary is a treasure chest, but too often students see it only as Pandora's box. The mere mention of a dictionary often suggests punishment, or it is associated with boring, endless, mindless ditto sheets which ineffectively "teach" vocabulary skills. Unfortunately, the dictionary may also be viewed the same way by some teachers. (Contrast the availability of dictionaries in teachers' workrooms and in a school's detention halls.)

When I was confronted with the dilemma of turning Pandora's box into a treasure chest, one of my eighth grade students gave me the key—a game called "Deceptive Definitions." I have been told that a version of this game, called "Fictionary," which has slightly more elaborate scoring rules, is popular with many teachers.

Although the explanation for Deceptive Definitions was complicated, one of my students and I had played the game a few times, and we became aware that the treasure was *ours*. The more often the game is played, the more self-motivated students become in order to improve their own skills of dictionary use (especially with pronunciation key and guide), vocabulary building, imitative writing, listening and reading comprehension, memorization, and spelling. The directions for playing the game are presented in the accompanying chart.

Deceptive Definitions

	Directions	*Example*
Introduction to the Game	The teacher arranges to play two rounds.	
Round 1	1. The teacher chooses a word from the dictionary and writes it on chalkboard with pronunciation guide (if needed for review of skill).	1. merl (mərl)
	2. The teacher writes four deceptive definitions and the true definition on the chalkboard.	2. a. to rotate in a counterclockwise direction b. blackbird c. corner spring in a mattress d. fiber used in elastic e. Neanderthal weapons
	3. Students write down the letter identifying the definition that they believe is the correct one.	
	4. The teacher identifies the correct answer.	4. merl b. blackbird
	5. Each student who chose blackbird earns 1 point.	
Round 2	1. The teacher writes a new word on the chalkboard and selects four students to write deceptive definitions for the word.	1. anlace (an ləs)
	2. The teacher collects the definitions.	
	3. The teacher writes all the definitions on the chalkboard.	3. a. tropical flower b. type of sour cherry having blue-green fruit c. therapeutic psychologist d. leather strip used for tying e. a tapering medieval dagger
	4. The students again choose the definition that they believe is the true definition and write the identifying letter on their papers.	
	5. The teacher announces the correct definition and the names of students whose deceptive definitions were chosen.	5. anlace e. a tapering medieval dagger
Scoring	Each student who chose the true definition earns 1 point. Any student whose deceptive definition was chosen by others earns 1 point for every student who was fooled.	

After playing two rounds of the game with the teacher, the students can play the game without additional guidance. Each student can have a turn at selecting a word from the dictionary, for which deceptive definitions can be written and then presenting the definitions to a peer group of four to five students. (*Note*: To promote listening comprehension skills, the definitions can be read aloud and then written on the chalkboard or notepaper.) Or, working in small groups, students can select an intriguing vocabulary word; each student can then contribute a definition for the word and let other groups in the class come to consensus on which is the true definition. The rules remain the same: one point for each group that chooses the correct definition and one point for the small group each time one of its deceptive definitions is chosen by another group.

The point of Deceptive Definitions in the first few rounds of the game is simply to get students interested in the dictionary and excited about learning new words. While they may not use the specific words gained in the Deceptive Definitions game in their own writing, they may reach for a new word to convey what they do want to say. In subsequent games, the teacher can supply a list of words that relate more directly to the content of the course. At the same time that they are building vocabulary skills, students are also practicing imitative writing. The deceptive definitions they write must sound as if they came from the dictionary in order for their definitions to stump their classmates. This aspect of the game can be a rehearsal for the stylistic writing they will do later in the semester.

Deceptive Definitions is, indeed, a treasure chest. It can be adapted to any grade level and tailored to any student population. It promotes active rather than passive learning and it is fun.

Mend your speech a little,
Lest it may mar your fortunes.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

Teaching Vocabulary Through Competition

By Michael O'Brien

English Instructor, Allan Hancock College, Santa Maria; and Teacher/Consultant, UCI Writing Project

> *"All right, the period is almost over. Both teams are even. Buker is up for the South."*
>
> *"Yea, Buke!" his teammates shout.*
>
> *". . . and Kelly is up for the North."*
>
> *"You can do it, Kelly!" one of her teammates yells encouragingly.*
>
> *". . . and at stake is an all-expense paid trip to Enid, Oklahoma, for the Miss Oil By-Products Beauty Pageant !"*

Hooray!" some students shout. Others simply roll their eyes at me.

If you visit my class on vocabulary day, you will find that my students yell a lot—probably because I use team competition.

Most of my vocabulary program is boringly standard. In fact, I have some reservations about "teaching" vocabulary through the use of lists. I have, however, always bowed to community pressure. For years I got the words from class-related reading, dictated the words and the meanings (which, I found, promotes listening skills) on Monday, and then held a test on Friday. Lately, however, I have changed my approach to try to help students who take the *Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT)*. Therefore, I have been focusing on prefixes, suffixes, and roots and choosing words in which they appear—the more advanced the class, the more difficult the words. Remedial classes not only get easier but also involve fewer words. Two books that I have found helpful in this work, although I have done a lot of adapting, are *Vocabulary for the High School Student*[1] and *Vocabulary for the College-Bound* Student.[2] These also have analogy exercises, which are helpful for the *SAT*.

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[1] Harold Levine, *Vocabulary for the High School Student*. New York: AMSCO School Publications, Inc., 1983.

[2] Harold Levine, *Vocabulary for the College-Bound Student*. New York: AMSCO School Publications, Inc., 1983.

Before the day of the test, I set aside half of a period for the competition. To give variety, I often divide up teams in different ways. One day it might be a battle of the sexes; the next time it might be a competition between the rows or even between people wearing blue versus those wearing brown. I let the students choose their team names, which often give insight into the peculiarities of the adolescent mind. Then I announce the prize, which is hopelessly fabulous or silly or sometimes as prosaic as being able to leave first when the lunch bell rings.

To begin the competition, I call team representatives to the chalkboards; I arrange them so that they are facing away from each other to make "borrowing" difficult. I give them a word at random and ask them to write the word and its definition on the chalkboard. For a correct spelling of the vocabulary word, the team gets a point; for an accurate, correctly spelled definition, the team gets another point. I have also tried Las Vegas Vocabulary in which I set betting limits based on word difficulty. Depending on the confidence of the player, he or she can bet cautiously or bet the limit. The team with the most "money" at the end of the class period is the winner. I hope I have not led any students to a life of moral degeneration through Las Vegas Vocabulary. But if I have, at least they will be articulate degenerates.

Other competitive approaches can be used successfully. I have a colleague who uses Vocabulary Charades. The student teams try to guess the vocabulary word through animated silent clues given by a teammate. The team with the lowest combined times for guessing the words is the winner. He reports that the students are wildly imaginative and easily get caught up in the enthusiasm of the game. And why not make something that is as tedious as memorizing vocabulary as stimulating as possible?

I have used the competition method successfully with the whole spectrum of high school age and ability groups. Even the students who are passive and uninterested in school seem to respond to this activity. After having these contests for a while, peer pressure becomes high for the students to study. Those who know their words are cheered; those who do not know them let down their teammates. By making the prize something silly or fantastical, I minimize the disappointment of losing and maximize the entertainment and challenge of competing. Usually, my students are so caught up in the contest that they do not even realize how much they are learning in the process.

Verbal Density: Expanding Students' Use of Verbs

By Evelyn Ching
Former English and Fine Arts Teacher,
Villa Park High School, Orange Unified School District;
and Teacher/Consultant, UCI Writing Project

Although I stress several aspects of vocabulary to show high school students how diction contributes to a mature writing style, one of the most useful concepts I have found is that of verbal density, or the ratio of verbs and verbals to the total number of words in a piece of writing. It is an easy concept to demonstrate in the writing of various authors and becomes simple for the students to use in evaluating their own or others' writing styles.

For the lesson I first explain the rationale: that *moving pictures* created by interesting active verbs are far more fascinating to read than almost any still *portrait* that depends largely on the verb *to be* and its various forms. Even John Steinbeck's descriptions in which very little *happens* are full of evocative verbs that move the reader's mental eyes around the picture much as an artist, such as Cezanne, skillfully manipulates the eye of the viewer in one of his still lifes.

After the rationale is explained, students need to be reminded of what a verb and a verbal are; e.g., any verb, its conjugational parts and constructs, gerunds, participial and infinitive phrases, and participles used as modifiers. Also counted are those words in which the noun form and verb form are the same: *strike, slide, ride, smile,* and so forth. Do not be surprised by how many of these words come from sports. Encourage students to make this connection, because sports broadcasting, particularly on radio, has a high verbal ratio.

Next, it is useful to show how the process works by providing several samples. I distribute a selection in which I have previously counted the total number of words (between 200—300 is best). Then I *walk* my students through the selection by reading it aloud, emphasizing the verbs and verbals, which they underline on their copies. I purposely *forget* several to encourage them to look actively, not just listen to me. Here is one of the selections I have used:

1904—The Forgotten Games

> ST. LOUIS—It was late one spring afternoon. A watery sun tried fitfully to pierce the clouds that hung over the city. In Forest Park, the trees were bare, their branches tracing stark patterns against the dull gray sky.
>
> In a far corner of the Washington University campus, great mudstreaked Caterpillar tractors and bulldozers eased their way between the ranks of parked cars, their exhausts sending puffs of dirty smoke into the afternoon air.
>
> Workmen, warmly bundled against the cold, sloshed through the rain-filled potholes, already thinking about the end of another shift. Huge trucks, piled high with debris, carried away the results of the day's demolition.
>
> Francis Field, its turf churned to mud by the treads of the giant earth movers, had a sad look about it. The black wrought-iron fence surrounding the field lay flat in places, as if having given up trying to keep the future from tearing away at the past. Already, the once-proud cement grandstand, the first of its kind in the United States, had been reduced to little more than a mound of broken concrete, twisted wire, and splintered wood.
>
> Not so, however, for the giant stone pillars and ornate gates at the east end of the field. There they stood, as they had done for four-score years and more, and there they will remain.[1]
>
> (220 words; verbal density = 1:7.3)

Before counting the total number of words in the selection, I ask a volunteer to read aloud just the verbs and verbals. The students will be able to follow the action with almost no help at all from nouns, adverbs, or their "great, fabulous, fantastic" adjectives.

The verbal density is figured by dividing the total number of words by the number of verbs and verbals.[2] The resulting number will be the denominator of the verbal-density fraction. Studies have shown that professional writers consistently achieve a verbal density of about 1:6; college students, 1:10; and many high school students, 1:12—15 .

Usually, I follow the demonstration by distributing two selections, such as the following, for which I have already calculated the verbal density:

Excerpt from "The Most Dangerous Game"

> An apprehensive night crawled slowly by like a wounded snake, and sleep did not visit Rainsford, although the silence of a dead world was on the jungle. Toward morning when a dingy gray was varnishing the sky, the cry of some startled bird focused Rainsford's attention in that direction. Something was coming through the bush, coming slowly, carefully, coming by the same winding way Rainsford had come. He flattened himself down on the limb, and through a screen of leaves almost as thick as tapestry, he watched. . . . That which was approaching was a man.
>
> It was General Zaroff. He made his way along with his eyes fixed in utmost concentration on the ground before him. He paused, almost beneath the tree, dropped to his knees and studied the ground. Rainsford's impulse was to hurl himself down like a panther, but he saw that the general's right hand held something metallic—a small automatic pistol.
>
> The hunter shook his head several times, as if he were puzzled. Then he straightened up and took from his case one of his black cigarettes; its pungent incense-like smoke floated up to Rainsford's nostrils.
>
> Rainsford held his breath. The general's eyes had left the ground and were traveling inch by inch up the tree.[3]
>
> *(212 words; verbal density = 1:5.05)*

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[1] Grahame L. Jones, "1904—The Forgotten Games," *Los Angeles Times*, Part VIII, p. 4, July 24, 1984. Copyright, 1984, *Los Angeles Times*; used by permission of the publisher.

[2] In counting the number of verbs and verbals, a verb and its helping verb are counted as one; infinitives, as one; hyphenated words, as one; gerunds, as one; participles, as one; and nouns that are identical with the verb form, as one.

[3] Richard E. Connell, "The Most Dangerous Game." Copyright, 1924, by Richard Connell; copyright renewed 1952, by Louise Fox Connell. Reprinted by permission of Brandt & Brandt Literary Agents, Inc.

Excerpt from *An Introduction to Shakespeare*

An actor also had to be a trained swordsman, for the London audiences knew a great deal about the art of fencing and the Theatre was often hired for exhibition matches by professionals. A good fencer needed years of training and a great deal of physical endurance, for the heavy Elizabethan rapier was a brutal weapon and the fencer was trained to make for his opponent's eyes or strike below the ribs. Actors had an even more difficult problem, since they had to face a critical audience on an open stage in the glare of the afternoon sun and stage a duel which was realistic enough so it would look as though a man had actually been killed.[4]

(118 words; verbal density = 1:5.9)

After we have read the selection, we discuss it as a class. This follow-up makes students especially aware of the impact of verbals in a given selection.

When students begin to have confidence in their own writing and, in particular, to feel secure about their ability to fix errors and to improve their effectiveness as writers, I have them run a verbal density test on a piece of their own writing or the work of an author they admire or enjoy.

At this point, I ask students to apply what they have learned by using an idea I picked up from Barbara Morton's word-sprouting technique—having students apply the missing words in a paragraph. But instead of having them use only forms of a root word, like *decide,* I encourage them to use as many original verbs and verbals as they can think of, as I did in the following exercises:

Supply the Verbs for the Blanks:

An ancient popcorn machine _________ the door, and a long glass counter _________ down the narrow aisle. Mounds and pounds of candies—most of them homemade—are in baskets gaily _________ with ribbons and red plastic roses.

A little boy _________ in his jeans for a dime—the price of an ice cream cone. Another youngster _________ down a dime for a bag of popcorn and _________ out. A man enters and _________ the walkways, _________ something, that special, certain something to _________ a sweet tooth.

Slowly he _________ toward the end of the counter.

At last the man's jaw _________ firm; he stands erect, no longer _________ over the stronghold of sweets, his decision _________.

List the Verbs and Verbals You Supplied:

____

____

____

More Original Verbs and Verbals:

____

____

____

We share the different student versions of the exercise as a class and, in the process, develop a word bank of effective verbs and verbals that students can draw on in upcoming writing assignments. Having students perform this same task on the work of prominent authors (with the verbs and verbals removed) helps the students enlarge their vocabularies, increase their use of dictionaries and thesauruses, and gain a better understanding of the elements of style.

The final step in the lesson is to ask students to perform a verbal density analysis on something they have written. This concrete experience with their own work is the best motivator for using a more action-oriented vocabulary in the future. Invariably the ratio of verbs and verbals in my students' writing increases as a result of this lesson and, as a by-product, their vocabulary is enhanced and their style becomes more vital.

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[4] Marchette Chute, *An Introduction to Shakespeare.* New York: E. P. Dutton and Co., Inc., © 1951, p. 26. Used by permission of the publisher.

MADDOG: Choosing Nouns to Create a Dominant Impression

By Scott Edwards Silva
English Teacher, La Habra High School,
Fullerton Joint Union High School District;
and Teacher/Consultant, UCI Writing Project

Many types of writing—such as autobiography, observation, and even evaluation—call on students to portray people, places, objects, or events and make them seem real to the reader. I find that when students attempt to revise such pieces, to bring them to life, many only toss in a few adjectives. Some students include more action verbs. Few, however, realize the importance of nouns, the words they choose to name specific objects and details. MADDOG prompts students to build a base of names for the details in their writing and then choose from this base to dramatically convey a dominant impression. This lesson helps students tap their own vocabularies to find alternatives to lifeless nouns.

Prior to this lesson, the class reads several descriptive or narrative pieces to practice identifying the dominant impression, the central feeling or mood of a piece. These dominant impressions are frequently what Rebekah Caplan would call the "telling sentences."

To begin our look at nouns, I read students a rough draft of a paragraph recalling an adventure I had with a dog when I was a paperboy:

> Even though I knew where the dogs were, I could occasionally get caught off guard. At one house, the dogs would usually be in the front yard, waiting for me. Having learned the hard way that the dogs would chase me if I rode past them on my bike, I parked my bike and walked the newspaper to the door. One day I only saw two of the dogs in the yard. I walked cautiously past them, watching their lips curl and hearing the growls which came from deep in their throats. Then, just as I was about to set the paper down, I saw the third dog. He walked toward me and everything about him filled me with terror. We both stopped and stared, waiting for each other to make the next move. He waited for me to turn and flee; I waited for him to pounce.

The class then acts as my writing group to help me focus on the dominant impression. We recognize that I'm trying to re-create the feeling of terror, but that I don't really show a clear picture of the dog, the cause of my fear.

I model, with the class's help, how I go about finding more details with which to create my portrait of terror. I begin by drawing the outline of a large dog on the chalkboard. Seeing my drawing (which students think is a sloth, horse, or pig before I tell them it's a dog) makes the less artistic students comfortable later when I have them draw.

Students suggest possible names for dogs, such as *Fido, Brutus, Butch, Fifi, Killer*—all of which indicate qualities of the dogs' personalities. I list these on the chalkboard above the dog. Students then provide different words meaning *dog*, such as *cur, mutt, hound, pooch*, and *mongrel*. If students are unfamiliar with these names, their classmates can usually define them. I then proceed around the dog, from part to part, asking for synonyms for these parts. I write these words next to the respective part on the board. The dog's mouth area, for example, might also be named its *jaw, muzzle, chompers, kisser, licker*, or *destroyer*. *Claws, dukes, pads, feet, shredders* could replace the more common word *paw*. Students may suggest words that are part of their personal vocabularies, even if these words can't be found in a dictionary. I also encourage the students to make comparisons, so the dog's tail might, for example, become a whip or spike. (See Figure 4.)

After the dog has been surrounded by nouns, we discuss their connotations, what these different words imply. What kind of dog, for example, would be named Fifi? What kind of dog would have *shredders* instead of *paws*? We look at the words we have listed and circle those words that could be used to describe the dog in my paragraph, the cur that frightened me as I attempted to deliver the daily news. We choose words like *Brutus, Killer, fangs, chompers*, and *shredders*. In identifying the dog as my enemy, we might come up with alternatives like *villain, opponent, nemesis, terror*, and *fiend*.

Just a few sentences show how much power more precise nouns generate:

> Killer narrowed the slits of his eyes and lifted his gums to reveal chiseled, saliva-covered fangs. His

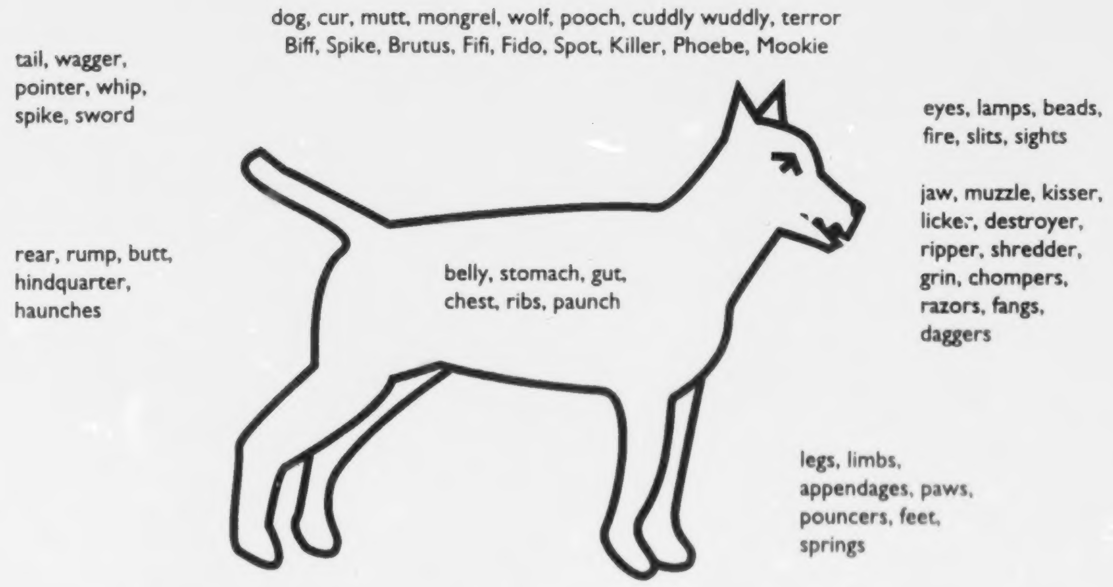
dog, cur, mutt, mongrel, wolf, pooch, cuddly wuddly, terror
Biff, Spike, Brutus, Fifi, Fido, Spot, Killer, Phoebe, Mookie
tail, wagger, pointer, whip, spike, sword
eyes, lamps, beads, fire, slits, sights
jaw, muzzle, kisser, licker, destroyer, ripper, shredder, grin, chompers, razors, fangs, daggers
rear, rump, butt, hindquarter, haunches
belly, stomach, gut, chest, ribs, paunch
legs, limbs, appendages, paws, pouncers, feet, springs

Fig. 4. Nouns Generated from MADDOG

> ears went back as his hairs stood up along his spine like soldiers answering a bugle call. His tail went stiff, a sword waiting for the attack. As I watched his muscles clenched around his haunches, I knew who would emerge victorious from this contest.

At this point, students are usually ready to repeat the process to describe a situation they have experienced. I have them select from their writing folders a descriptive piece with which they would like to work. The students do a quick sketch of their subjects. If they are revising a longer narrative, then they choose a key moment, scene, or object. The sketch needn't demonstrate artistic ability; its only purpose is to help the students reexamine their subjects. As I did with the dog, the students label their drawings, using as many possible names for each feature as possible. Students enjoy helping each other, since their lists are different. They can also use a thesaurus to expand their choices.

Students then return to their written pieces and select nouns which support the dominant impression they wish to convey. When the students revise, they usually do more than simply replace the nouns, since reaching for more precise names makes them think of new details and actions to add as well.

Extensions to this activity provide further practice in vocabulary building. If the students have a less powerful vocabulary, many of the possible nouns might be new words. Having students order the noun list for *dog* (or one of the body parts) from most fierce to most gentle would help reinforce the new vocabulary. Students might also rewrite an effective descriptive passage from a literary work, changing the nouns and, thus, the dominant impression. Additionally, they can use literary works as the basis for a discussion of word choice, speculating on why authors choose the words they do.

Careful word choice—of all parts of speech, not just nouns—is characteristic of all effective writing. MADDOG helps students consider the impressions conveyed by precise language.

Evaluation

Holistic Scoring in the Classroom

By Glenn Patchell
English Teacher, Irvine High School,
Irvine Unified School District;
and Teacher/Consultant, UCI Writing Project

Holistic scoring is a technique of evaluation that solves many of the problems of a writing teacher. The conscientious English teacher concerned with teaching writing effectively is often burdened with the obligation of reading several class sets of papers a week. Even the best intentioned and most dedicated teacher burns out after several weeks. I found that after 12 weeks I could hardly stand to look at a student paper. The results of the burnout were that students did not get immediate feedback; they did not write as often; and I felt guilty for offending the principles of good teaching. I welcomed the use of holistic scoring because it gave me needed relief from the paper load, involved my students in a more effective learning experience, and provided parents and administrators with concrete evidence of the students' progress and the program's effectiveness.

Simply put, holistic scoring is evaluating the paper as a whole. It assumes that each writing skill is related to the others and that no one skill is more important or should receive greater emphasis than another. The evaluation is achieved through the use of a rubric (scoring guide) which lists the criteria for each score. The rubrics that readers use may be based on various scales, usually ranging from nine points to four points. I personally find the four-point scale less desirable because it relates too closely to the common grading scale of A through F. Each rubric should be tailored to the specific writing task described in the prompt (assignment). Holistic scoring is used by school districts to evaluate proficiency tests, staff development projects, class progress, and individual improvement. Holistic scoring also serves the English teacher or any teacher of writing in the classroom to facilitate evaluation of the students' work. I soon found that one of the most practical

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Holistic scoring is evaluating the paper as a whole. It assumes that each writing skill is related to the others and that no one skill is more important or should receive greater emphasis than another.

GLENN PATCHELL

uses of holistic scoring was in the classroom with students as the readers.

As a tool for the teacher, holistic scoring provides more time to instruct because less time is spent evaluating the students' papers. For example, before I used holistic scoring, I spent most of my evaluation time marking errors and writing suggestions or basic comments on the papers. Unfortunately, the students rarely read or understood my comments. Through the use of the prompt and rubric, the teacher establishes a clear purpose for each assignment, the student is exposed to the criteria for evaluation of each writing assignment, and the writer is directed to the strengths and weaknesses of each writing sample. For instance, the UCI Writing Project used the following descriptive prompt in an evaluation of the writing skills of tenth, eleventh, and twelfth grade students in the classes of teachers trained in the Writing Project and in the classes of comparable teachers who had not been exposed to the Writing Project's techniques:

> Write a paper in which you describe a restaurant that you remember vividly. It could be the best, worst, or most unusual. Include in your description the senses (sight, smell, touch, hearing, and taste).

Note that the prompt was designed to stimulate writing and was broad-based enough so that every student could draw on his or her experience. Moreover, the student received specific directions as to what to include in the essay. Based on the prompt, a rubric was established that clearly delineates the criteria for scoring each writing sample (see the next page).

Although the prompt and rubric described above were used for a large-scale evaluation, the same principles apply to holistic scoring in the classroom. Some students have a hard time understanding why they received a particular grade on a paper, but I have never had a student who had difficulty comprehending why he or she received a certain score when a rubric was available and clearly explained in advance. The careful use of a rubric will provide the student instruction in specific areas of usage, spelling, sentence structure, word choice, and so forth. For example, one area that always concerns me is the variety of sentence patterns. Most high school student writers have little understanding of the value of subordination. Requiring several complex sentences or the use of clauses beginning with *because, if, since, although,* and so forth and listing the use of subordination as a criterion on the rubric make the student aware of complex sentences. When writers find that their papers received scores that indicate a lack of sentence variety, they know that they must learn the concept of subordination.

One of the greatest boons of holistic scoring in the classroom is that it actually involves students in the evaluation process. As the students learn to use the rubric, I have discovered that they can be trained to score writing assignments effectively. The rubric is now viewed in a new light as they try to apply it to the papers of other students. Then, not only do they better understand the rubric, but they also become responsible for helping other writers improve by directing them to the appropriate criteria by the score they select for each paper. The experience of Carolyn is a case in point. Carolyn was one of those students who always excelled. She worked hard to complete each assignment and to produce quality work. Soon, her

Rubric: Description

9—8 This paper is clearly superior. The writer developed the topic with excellent organization, content, and insight, and he or she displayed facile use of language and mastery of mechanics. A person who has written a *9–8* paper has done most or all of the following well:

- Developed a good introduction.
- Maintained an appropriate point of view throughout the paper.
- Employed precise, apt, or evocative descriptive vocabulary.
- Did not shift in tense or person.
- Organized ideas effectively and provided an introduction, some closure, and an orderly progression from one idea to another.
- Varied sentence structure and length.
- Used effectively the conventions of written English—spelling, usage, sentence structure, capitalization, punctuation.
- Used at least three examples with specific supporting details.
- Used at least three of five senses.
- Wrote legibly.

7 This is a thinner version of the *9–8* paper—still impressive, cogent, convincing, but less well handled in terms of organization, insight, or language.

6—5 A score of 5 or 6 applies to papers in the upper-half category that are less well written than a *7* paper. This paper may exhibit less maturity of thought than was exhibited in the papers with higher scores, and the writer has not handled organization, syntax, or mechanics as well. The *5* paper is a thinner version of the *6*. A *6–5* paper will exhibit these characteristics:

- Has a clear introduction.
- Has an appropriate point of view.
- Communicates clearly.
- Shows some sense of organization but is not fully organized.
- Uses less variety of sentence structure and length.
- Contains some errors in mechanics, usage, and sentence structure.
- Usually has three examples with supporting details.
- Uses at least two of the five senses.
- Handwriting can be easily read.

4—3 These scores apply to a paper that maintains the general idea of the writing assignment, shows some sense of organization, but is weak in content, thought, language facility, and mechanics. A *3* paper is a thinner version of the *4* paper. A *4–3* paper has these characteristics:

- Introduction lacks clarity.
- Has shifts in tense and person.
- Displays a minimal overall organization.
- Has little variety of sentence structure and many sentence errors.
- Has some misunderstanding of the prompt.
- Contains serious errors in mechanics, usage, and sentence structure.
- Examples and supporting details are not clearly stated or defined.
- Uses at least one of the five senses.
- Handwriting can usually be easily read.

2 This score applies to a paper that makes no attempt to deal with the topic and compounds the weaknesses found in a *4–3* paper. A *2* paper exhibits several of the following:

- Has no sense of organization.
- Shifts constantly in tense and person.
- Shows little or no development of ideas; lacks any focus on specific and related details.
- Distorts, misreads, or ignores the topic.
- Contains disjointed sentences, lacks sense of sentence progression and variety, and contains many sentence errors.
- Shows serious faults in handling the conventions of written English to the extent of impeding a reader's understanding.
- Has no discussion of the five senses.
- Handwriting cannot be read easily.

1 This score is used for any response that is not on the topic and has almost no redeeming qualities.

reputation earned her such respect that the presence of her name on an assignment often earned her an *A*. However, during a class holistic scoring session, Carolyn received a 3 from her peers. Because the scorers were all boys, she appealed to me for a second opinion. I inserted her paper in a group of papers to be scored by another class. A second scoring again produced a 3 evaluation. Carolyn was then convinced to go back to the rubric and determine what the weaknesses in her essay were.

Training students to score holistically takes time and patience. Students will not become proficient overnight. But with the same training given to teachers, I have seen students score with the same consistency as adults. In the process of scoring, students also become aware of the criteria for good writing and learn to identify areas which need improvement not only in the papers of others but also in their own compositions. Significantly, in seeing their peers' writing and receiving group feedback on their own papers, student writers suddenly become conscious that they have an audience other than the teacher. This situation clearly lessens the burden on the teacher as the sole evaluator of student work.

Although holistic scoring is a valuable tool, I would never recommend it as the only method of evaluation. When I take the time to evaluate and completely edit a student's paper, I want to be able to have a conference with the writer about his or her paper. I now have the time for individual conferences because holistic scoring does help moderate the paper load, as well as provide specific criteria for evaluation, improve assignments, allow more writing, and motivate students to understand what constitutes good writing. The student writes with purpose, recognizes good writing, and learns to take responsibility for learning about the writing process through reading, scoring, and responding to the efforts of his or her peers through the use of holistic scoring.

I find that I use holistic scoring more and more. My students respond to holistic scoring and learn from it. Much of the anxiety is removed from the act of writing, for the student writer is freed from the red pen of correction, and the teacher is freed from the stress of editing and grading excessive amounts of student work.

As an added benefit, holistic scoring provides the teacher with a more objective means of evaluation, which can be demonstrated to interested parents and administrators. I have found the use of folders containing a sequential record of each student's prompts, rubrics, first drafts, and final scored papers as an effective means of documenting students' progress as well as making my short-term and long-term composition goals clear.

> *Holistic scoring is evaluating the paper as a whole. It assumes that each writing skill is related to the others and that no one skill is more important or should receive greater emphasis than another.*
>
> GLENN PATCHELL

Practical Ideas for Using Holistic Scoring

Holistic Scoring: The Good News and the Bad

By Michael O'Brien

English Instructor, Allan Hancock College, Santa Maria;
and Teacher/Consultant, UCI Writing Project

I have often used holistic scoring in my high school classroom over the last three years. While attesting to its partial effectiveness, I look with some disbelief at the claims that holistic scoring, like a patent medicine, cures everything from rambling run-on sentences to murky thesis statements.

One "miracle" of holistic scoring that I can attest to is the results of using a rubric. Students do appreciate being presented with a precise description of what is expected of their writing. The rubric is also a ready-made list of terms I repeat over and over to students so that "unified composition" and "specific, supporting details" become a part of their vocabulary, a necessary step toward writing more effectively.

Another claim of those who advocate holistic scoring is that it works Fast! Fast! Fast! Indeed, it is a quick way to evaluate a set of papers. Therefore, I can ask my students to write more, which is an important gain. There are, however, side effects. On the return of a paper, a typical reaction is "Oh, I got a five on a scale of seven. Say, Mr. O'Brien, what were my problems here?"

"Look at the rubric" is my hopeful reply.

"Okay, but I still don't know if I've got excessive mechanical errors, a lack of specific details, ineffective organization . . . "

So I have tried attaching checklists to the papers, indicating areas of strength and weakness, but I make the students find the errors. Yet, by the time I have completed the checklist and worked with students who cannot find their errors, this process has become as Slow! Slow! Slow! as the traditional marking of papers. However, since my experience with holistic scoring, I have heard of a strategy used by Catherine D'Aoust, a UCI Writing Project colleague, that I plan to try. Catherine returns papers to students with only a holistic score (no comments or checklists), and she requires them to write a one-page paper explaining to her why they received the score they did. Perceptive self-assessments earn an extra point for the overall paper. Students who are unable to specify the reasons for their score are called in for conferences so that Catherine can work one-on-one with those students.

Another claim for holistic scoring is that students can score each other's papers. I have found this partially true. It is valuable that they use the rubric as a criterion for judging, that they provide another audience for the writer, and that they learn by reading the work of others. One drawback, however, is that, again, even with the comments of other students written on their papers, the writers are still getting limited information. Another problem is that even after extensive training with samples, I have found that there are always a few students who are unreliable graders. Thus, a universal concern of students is that the scores and comments on their papers may be inaccurate. Perhaps one way to alleviate this concern is to have both the teacher and student peer groups score the students' papers, and then average the two scores if they are one or more points apart.

Ultimately, I suppose the good news outweighs the bad. As I look over my list of pros and cons, I see that holistic scoring makes the criteria for writing clearer to students, speeds up the evaluation process, allowing for more writing assignments, and enables students to participate in the process. Overall, it clearly benefits the students. As for teachers, it will not lighten the burden of the paper load as much as most of us would like. And it cannot (or should not) replace oral or written feedback from the teacher. But it provides the teacher with a variety of options in responding to students' writing: to score and comment, to score only and let the students comment, to comment only and let peer groups score, to score along with peer groups, and so forth.

No, holistic scoring is not a patent medicine for curing writing problems, but it can be a valuable supplement to good writing instruction.

Compromising with an Ideal: Rubrics Based on Grades

By Charles Schiller
Former English Teacher, Laguna Beach High School,
Laguna Beach Unified School District;
and Teacher/Consultant, UCI Writing Project

The classes that I teach at Laguna Beach High School are mostly college-preparatory, and as anyone who has taught such classes already knows, letter grades are very important to college-bound students. They will not settle for a number from a rubric—or, at least, not for long. I had to deal with this fact in adapting the ideas and methods of the UCI Writing Project to my teaching. The result was a rubric based on letter grades.

I now use such rubrics routinely, both for the guidance of students before they write and as a reminder to myself as I evaluate. This practice also takes the mystery out of how grades are determined; (no, it's not tea leaves, students, nor is it voodoo incantations). Ideally, a new rubric should be created for each assignment, but in this less-than-ideal world, a standard rubric for a paper of literary analysis (such as the one that follows) can be put into the student's portfolio at the beginning of the semester and then referred to for each new assignment.

Rubric for a Paper of Literary Analysis

A Paper

Fulfills the assignment

Interesting title (not just a label) that indicates the direction of the paper, comments on the thesis, or provides color

Well structured

Introduction: lively opening; clear, specific thesis

Development: logical organization of support; does not retell story but refers to plot *selectively*; uses well-chosen, properly cited quotations

Conclusion: states insights gained, makes final statement

Clear style, reveals authentic voice

Good insights, well expressed

Few, if any, mechanical errors

Excellent appearance; written in blue or black ink or produced on a typewriter or word processor on standard paper with specified heading

B Paper

Thinner version of an *A* paper; the difference perhaps due to thinner development or less vigorous style or a more mechanical conclusion

Still a very good paper, but not as consistently so

C Paper

Title possibly a perfunctory label

Structure probably inconsistent

Introduction: May be vague, thesis too general

Development: may contain few specific proofs; may rely heavily on retelling plot rather than discussing ideas

Conclusion: may be a routine tag line or paragraph reflecting little thought

Choppy and simplistic style; or pompous and needlessly complex; authentic voice hard to detect

May show only plot-level understanding

Careless errors in punctuation, spelling, or sentence structure, result of poor editing, lack of revision

Careless appearance

D Paper

Title, if any, probably that of the literary work itself, improperly punctuated

Structure hard to detect; one long paragraph with no thesis or conclusion, more a rambling retelling of the plot than a discussion

Style result of careless thinking, lack of revision

Inaccurate details

Mechanical errors

Careless appearance

F Paper

All or most of the *D* level problems

May be off topic

Does not fulfill the assignment

Primary Trait Scoring

By Virginia Bergquist
Teacher, Meadowpark Elementary School,
Irvine School District;
and Teacher/Consultant, UCI Writing Project

Primary trait scoring (PTS) is a versatile evaluation system in which the strengths and weaknesses of student writing are described. The system, developed by the National Assessment of Educational Progress, can be adapted for use in elementary, intermediate, and high school classrooms across the curriculum and can be used to:

- Measure the presence of particular characteristics or elements of style.
- Value content, yet consider correctness in assessment.
- Create a sense of purpose and audience during prewriting.
- Provide a focus for peer interaction during sharing and revising.

The PTS system is akin to holistic scoring because it is based on a rubric or set of criteria on which a paper will be evaluated, but the scoring system differs. With PTS the person evaluates a single characteristic, or primary trait, rather than a piece of writing as a whole. PTS scoring guides focus on the most important characteristic, or critical attribute, of a successful response to a given writing prompt. Other traits may also be identified as characteristics of a successful response and evaluated as secondary traits.

The following are two examples of teacher-generated prompts and primary trait scoring guides at the elementary and high school levels:

News About Hands at School

(Kindergarten through grade three)

PROMPT

Today you are a newspaper reporter. Choose one person who works at our school that you would like to write a news story about. Choose one activity that the person does and write a news story that describes and tells how the person's hands help him or her do the activity. Since your news story will be placed in the classroom's "News About Hands at School" book, it should be interesting and informative so your classmates and other people will want to read it.

EVALUATION

Primary Trait Scoring Guide

🙂 This news story is interesting to read. It accurately describes how a person who works at our school uses his or her hands to do his or her job.

😐 This news story is not as interesting as it could be. It tells about some of the person's duties but does not accurately describe how he or she uses his or her hands to do a job.

😮 This news story does not give enough information about how the person uses his or her hands to do the job. This lack of information made the story less interesting to read.

Secondary Trait Scoring Guide

🙂 This paper is neat and easy to read. Fewer than three total errors were made in capitalization, punctuation, and/or spelling.

😐 This paper is not as neat or easy to read. Three to five total errors were made in capitalization, punctuation, and/or spelling.

😮 This paper is not neat or easy to read. More than five total errors were made in capitalization, punctuation, and/or spelling.

Pac Man or Kick the Can?

(Grades seven and eight)

PROMPT

Interview your grandparents or other older adults who grew up during the Depression. Ask them to describe the toys and games they remember from their childhood. Then write a three-paragraph analytical/expository essay in which you:

- *Describe* one or more toys and/or games of the Depression era, and
- *Describe* one or more toys and/or games you enjoy.

After describing the two types of toys and games, show the *similarities* and *differences* between them. From your study of toys and games, *compare* what it was like to grow up during the Depression to what it is like to grow up now.

EVALUATION

The teacher will evaluate according to the following rubric. The paper is worth a total of 10 points:

5 points—Drawing Conclusions/Content
3 points—Structure
2 points—Mechanics/Format

Primary Trait—Drawing Conclusions/Content

- A *5* paper draws conclusions—compares childhood during the Depression with childhood today by giving examples of one or more toys/games from each era and by analyzing the similarities and differences of each.
- A *4* paper draws only one conclusion but otherwise fulfills the same criteria as a 5 paper.
- A *3* paper discusses only the toys/games and distinguishes between the two eras without drawing conclusions.
- A *2* paper does not discuss the similarities and differences of the toys/games in each era.
- A *1* paper does not provide sufficient detail about the toys/games or does not give one example from each era.

Secondary Traits—Structure and Mechanics/Format

STRUCTURE

- A *3* paper follows a three-paragraph structure using topic sentences, details, and transitions.
- A *2* paper omits one of the elements of a 3 paper.
- A *1* paper omits two of the elements of a 3 paper.

MECHANICS/FORMAT

- A *2* paper has neat margins, handwriting, and indentions; it uses proper spelling and capitalization and has a title.
- A *1* paper is not neat or does not follow the format given in class.
- A *0* paper addresses neither neatness nor format.

In lessons of the type just cited, the teacher can design a scoring system that weighs more heavily on the primary trait he or she wishes to highlight. For example, in the lesson on "News About Hands at School," the teacher made *an interesting story line and accuracy of description* the key elements; neatness and error-free writing were reinforced but considered as secondary to content. In the "Pac Man or Kick the Can?" scoring guide, the teacher stressed thinking skills, followed by organizational writing skills, appropriate paragraph form, and correct mechanics and grammar.

When creating the scoring guide, one must identify the purpose for writing, the audience to whom the writing will be addressed, and the domain or mode of the writing requested. Once these objectives are established, it is easy to determine the primary and secondary traits of the lesson. For instance, if the prompt asks the writer to explain how to make a peanut butter sandwich, it is of primary importance that the directions be clear and in the proper sequence in order for the reader to understand and follow them. If the writer fails to tell the reader to open the jelly jar, it will not matter how vividly he or she describes its contents.

The major goal of the PTS system is not to provide a grading or ranking device for writing. The goal is to describe the strengths and weaknesses of individual compositions so that students will understand clearly what the characteristics of a successful response are and be able to write and revise with those characteristics in mind. Having identified the primary and secondary traits, the teacher can plan prewriting activities which will help students achieve a successful response.

At the same time that the system clearly delineates for students the writing tasks they are being asked to perform, it enables the teacher to formulate his or her priorities in regard to writing instruction and to tailor assignments to foster the development of specific skills. Teachers who wish to stress fluency first and then form and correctness will find this system useful, as will teachers in curriculum areas other than English who wish to emphasize content. PTS can also be used to help transfer grammatical concepts, syntactical structures, and mechanical rules to students' writing, because mastery of a specific conventional skill (such as use of proper dialogue format in a narrative or the use of the colon in a descriptive essay) can be built into the scoring guide as a primary trait.

After some exposure to PTS, the students themselves will be able to contribute to the creation of primary and secondary trait scoring guides for future writing assignments. As their understanding of this process deepens, they will begin to develop an inherent set of criteria for what good writing is—not just on specific assignments, but good writing in general—and be better able to evaluate and revise their own papers before turning them in.

> *Holistic scoring provides more time to instruct because less time is spent evaluating the students' papers.*
>
> GLENN PATCHELL

Making Paper Marking Matter

By Robert Land
Senior Researcher,
Center for the Study of Evaluation,
University of California, Los Angeles

The primary reason for responding to students' writing is to make those students better writers. Of course, English teachers have other paper-marking concerns: justifying grades, making students feel good about themselves as writers, impressing students with their arcane knowledge of the fine points of grammar, demonstrating their ability to mark essays thoroughly and accurately, communicating their excitement and interest in their students' work, letting students know how closely their writing conforms to standard written English. But important as these concerns may be, all are subordinate to the goal of making students better writers.

For other teachers the distinction between instruction and evaluation is fairly clear; but when we are teachers of composition, everything that we say or write to students about their writing can be both evaluative and instructive. The act of responding to student writing permits composition teachers to enter into an individualized, mentor relationship with each student. Responding to student writing is what makes the teaching of composition so time-consuming and intellectually challenging. Responding to student writing can also make the teaching of composition the highest form of teaching.

But there is a great deal of evidence that our responses to student writing—particularly our written comments on working and final drafts—are often meaningless, or even harmful, to the student. Most research on paper-marking strategies reveals that teachers pay much more attention to *how* students say something than to *what* students have to say. Teachers seem to focus on matters of grammatical correctness and to ignore students' ideas. Moreover, analyses of teachers' marking of grammatical problems show that teachers frequently make incorrect, incomplete, or misleading comments on their students' essays. Thus, the subtext of too many composition teachers' comments is: "I don't care what you think, and studying these comments won't do you any good."

The consequence of this negative subtext is that many composition classes become games in which the teachers pretend to be asking students to think and care and express themselves well, and the students pretend to meet these expectations, all the while trying to figure out what the teacher "really wants." Clearly, composition teachers ought to do a better job of responding to student writing. I would like to share some principles of paper marking gleaned from research studies, from personal experience as a teacher of high school and college English, and from my observations of hundreds of teachers. You may find my ideas useful in themselves, or you may find them useful points of departure for developing or amending your own set of principles. In the end, the conditions you find in your classroom and your own attitudes, experiences, and knowledge will lead you to a personal style of paper marking. Your personal style may be very different from that of other effective teachers and still achieve the same end: helping students to become better writers.

Things to Keep in Mind While Marking Student Papers

1. *Treat each paper as a work-in-progress.* Some teachers comment on working drafts, and for them it is easier to remember that the primary purpose of their comments is to say something that will make the final draft better. Some teachers talk individually with some students about their working drafts, and increasing numbers of teachers conduct small-group, between-drafts workshops. But nearly all teachers write comments on final drafts, which also must be graded. When teachers are writing comments on graded final drafts, it is easy for them to focus on comments that point to what has been done well or poorly on that assignment and to forget the primary purpose of commenting: saying something that will help the student write better the next time. Thinking of all drafts, even final drafts, as works-in-progress (as one work in a sequence of assignments for one course, in a sequence of courses, all

designed to teach the student how to discover ideas independently and express them clearly through writing) helps keep the teacher focused on saying something that will help students next time. Grading such papers amounts to saying "This is where you stand, now." Comments on such papers should say "Given where you are and what I know about what you will be expected to do in future papers, here is what you have to do to maintain your standing, improve it, or both."

2. *Suspend judgment.* Often, what seems to be a problem in a student's essay is something that gets clarified or corrected in the next sentence or two. You'll save yourself a lot of crossing out over the years if you refrain from making a comment until you've gotten more context. Suspending judgment helps with all papers, and it may be critical when you are responding to papers written by nonnative speakers, who often use patterns of development that are less direct than those used by native speakers of American English. Let the student's text develop slowly, like a photographic print.
3. *Focus on dominant characteristics.* While suspending judgment, look for patterns of errors and dominant characteristics. An average writer may make 10 to 15 small "grammatical" mistakes and one or two big ones in a 500-word essay. Watch for mistakes that cluster together. For example, in first attempts at analysis, students often make errors in subordination. The main assertion gets lost because all assertions are given equal weight in a sentence. If subsequent assignments will require even more skillful analytical writing (and they probably will), it might be a good idea to ignore (or gloss over) the random spelling or verb tense error and to focus on helping the student solve the problem with subordinate-clause sentence patterns. Nonnative speakers typically make about twice as many small errors as native speakers do, but most of these errors have to do with the use of articles and prepositions and noun-verb agreement, linguistic features of American English that are slowly acquired and very hard to teach. Some evaluative and pedagogical comments about these small problems may be appropriate, but a teacher's commenting focus should be elsewhere. Often grammatical error is not the dominant characteristic of an essay. The main problem with some essays may be that they seem disorganized or that the writer's voice sounds inappropriate or that the writing is unfocused or fuzzy or "approximate." As best as we can, we should try to identify an essay's dominant characteristic and focus our comments on it.
4. *Keep asking whether a particular comment is likely to help the students write better.* "Awk" and "?" and "Frag" don't seem to work. Most students have been "awked" and "question-marked" and "fragged" repeatedly, without any effect on the offending writing practice. One way to keep a check on whether a comment works is to have students hand in all of their previous papers each time they hand in a new final draft. If a problem you've commented on before keeps cropping up, new marking strategies may be in order. Another way to check on the effect of comments is to ask the students to explain what they mean. If the student understands your comment and a problem persists anyway, it may be too early in that writer's development to work on that problem.
5. *Explain!* I have surveyed thousands of students, from ninth graders to college seniors. When students are asked to rate a number of paper-marking practices according to how much they help them write better, they uniformly give the most positive rating to "Teacher writes out an explanation of what I did right or wrong." Too often we fail to explain; instead, we write remarks such as "un-

To make marking work, we must make marking meaningful.

ROBERT LAND

clear," a comment that defines itself and does little else. "Unclear" written next to some circled text with an explanation of why the text was unclear is a little better. However, adding an example or two of what *you* might do to solve the problem would be much better. But ideally, if the unclear passage is a carefully selected example of a dominant characteristic, the comment should also point to other places where the same problem occurs and the same solution applies. A nice added touch might be specific references ("see page x, lines y to z") to published passages in the student's reader or to parts of a classmate's paper that reflect a successful solution to the writer's problem.

6. *Limit your commenting.* When you consider how much time and thought it takes to make one effective comment, it becomes clear that no teacher can make very many of them on a single essay. Even if you can budget 30 minutes per student essay, you will typically have time to make a fair number of minor comments, but only one or two focused comments. Good. If what you say makes a difference in how the student writes the next time, you've done something in half an hour that all the student's previous teachers couldn't do in many hours. Besides, students are not machines. They can only learn so much at a time.
7. *Don't overlook what a student has done well.* The dominant characteristic of some students' essays is that they are well written. If so, helping students identify what they did well so they can do it again might be the appropriate focus for commenting. Remember that instructive comments about what a student has done well may require as much explanation as do comments about what a student has done poorly. In nearly every essay, the writer has done something well. Try not to let it pass unnoticed.
8. *Consider the audience and the purpose of your comments.* You are commenting about a piece of writing, but you are addressing those comments to a young writer who is no less sensitive to criticism than we are. Moreover, that young writer probably has developed a well-founded skepticism of anything "English teachers" have to say. If your purpose is to get that young writer to improve, you may have to work on building that writer's trust as well as working on some things to say about his or her essays. "Voice" may be the key to building trust. Too often English teachers' comments sound like drill instructor's orders. Although such a voice can be effective—especially if it fits your personality—it would be wise to soften the sound of your comments, at least until your students get to know you better. The "I dunno, but" voice is another trust buster. Afraid of sounding like a drill instructor, some teachers pose their comments in the form of tentative questions that sound wimpy or sarcastic: "Maybe your papers would be better if you spelled more of the words correctly?" Voice is as tricky for teachers as it is for students, and it takes time to find a useful range of voices.
9. *Remember that writing comments is writing.* The rules that apply to any other purposeful forms of written communication apply to commenting on papers. Because writing comments is often a one-draft activity, it can be sloppy, with crossings out, lines and loops, the odd misspelling. Partly because I worry that I haven't made complete sense in my marginal notes to students, I almost always write a short paragraph or so at the end of the paper as a summary comment.
10. *Focus on meaning.* Nearly everything I've said about commenting so far could apply to matters of form or content—to matters of *how* the student says something or to *what* the student has to say. For many reasons it is best to keep most comments focused on the students' ideas. (Indeed, some research studies suggest that comments focusing on meaning lead to *more* grammatical improvement than do comments focusing on grammar, while comments focusing on grammar result in no improvement at all.) One way to keep a focus on ideas is to remember that you

> are primarily a teacher of thinking and secondarily a teacher of manners (the conventions of standard written English, in this case). The two roles are often compatible, but teaching students to think independently, to take chances, to explore new ideas is very difficult when the underlying message of your comments is "conform or fail."

Like most writers who address the topic of paper marking, I have avoided, so far, a discussion of mathematics. But mathematics is the enemy of English teachers who wish to teach composition. I have presented ten principles of paper marking. I could have listed 20 or just three. But no amount of elaboration or simplification will change the basic fact that if a teacher has 150 students, it will take that teacher as many as 75 out-of-class hours to mark thoroughly just one set of student papers (75 hours that mathematics teachers, for example, don't have to spend outside of class when they teach, say, fractions). Once a teacher commits to teaching composition (and not just to assigning and grading some papers), there are only two reasonable solutions to an impossible paper-marking load: marking all papers superficially or marking only some papers thoroughly. The latter option, while more difficult to manage, is probably better. One way to do it is to have students write frequently on many assignments and, periodically, to have a few students submit what they consider their best essay, along with the rest of their portfolio, for careful marking. Using this portfolio system, a teacher could give careful attention to the work of 150 students, 10 at a time, over a 15-week period. This procedure could be done perhaps twice during a normal school year. Students could be assigned even more writing than they would ordinarily do if every paper were read and graded (a benefit in and of itself), and teachers would probably spend no more time (about an hour per student per school year) responding to writing.

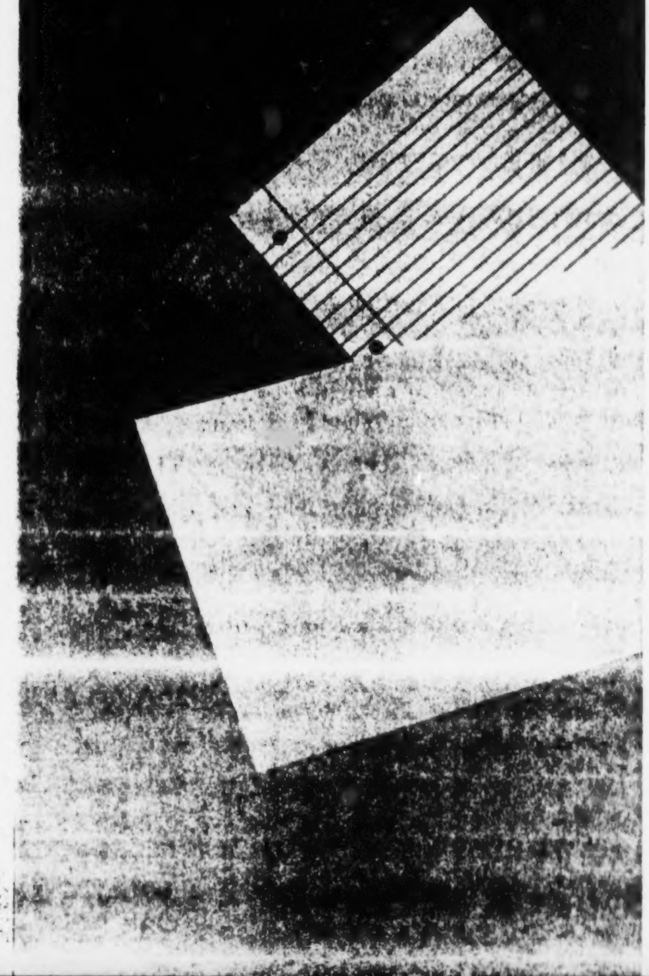
Of course, more frequent response to student writing would be even better, but teachers of composition should, I think, take a firm stand on insisting that students get high-quality, thoughtful responses to their writing, even if that means giving less frequent response. To make marking work, we must make marking meaningful.

Praising what students do well improves their writing more than correction of what they do badly.

HANDBOOK FOR PLANNING AN EFFECTIVE WRITING PROGRAM

311

Evaluation Techniques



Some Techniques for Oral Evaluation

By Michael O'Brien

English Instructor, Allan Hancock College, Santa Maria; and Teacher/Consultant, UCI Writing Project

Oral evaluation of student papers is like the bicycle in my garage: neglected but patiently waiting in the corner. Well, I decided to pull oral evaluation out of the cobwebbed corner, clean up the moving parts, and try it. With the help of a lecture I heard by Dorothy Bray of Sacramento City College, I found that oral evaluation is a very effective vehicle.

My motivations for trying oral evaluation were not entirely selfless: I got very tired of grading papers after school or at home. Also, I got frustrated about how my carefully written comments were either neglected or misunderstood. So I began to evaluate papers orally in class. I found through my own experience and from listening to Dr. Bray at a meeting of the University of California at Irvine's Writing Project that the following techniques are effective:

1. I assign papers of about 400 words so that I can evaluate six or seven of them in a 50-minute period and, thus, can plan on completing a class set in about five days.
2. While I work individually with a student at my desk, the others are working on writing assignments or on work sheets to help them in areas of weakness.
3. I structure the conference to the needs of each student by asking at the outset whether he or she had any problem or questions with the writing of the paper.
4. I try to give favorable comments early if I sense that the student has given a good effort. (The oral evaluation is a much more positive experience because written evaluations tend to be overwhelmingly negative, no matter how I try.)

EDITOR'S NOTE: We are grateful to the National Council of Teachers of English for granting us permission to reprint this article, which appeared in the January, 1982, issue of the *English Journal*.

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I have each student bring his or her journal to the conference to record my comments, both favorable and critical. Thus, the student has a log where he or she keeps all of my comments.

MICHAEL O'BRIEN

5. In my criticisms I try to cover one or two major problems, realizing that this is about as much as most of the students can work on at one time.
6. I give the student a chance to respond and ask questions. Often, a short explanation can clear up major concerns.
7. I have each student bring his or her journal to the conference to record my comments, both favorable and critical. Thus, the student has a log where he or she keeps all of my comments. This approach is very effective for isolating chronic problems and areas of improvement.
8. I do not grade the assignment. After doing two or more of the same type of paper, the student will choose the one that has the most promise and rewrite it. Then I evaluate the final copy and grade it in the traditional way.

After using this method in my three composition classes for one quarter of a school year not long ago, I asked the students to write their anonymous responses to the following questions:

1. Should we continue oral evaluations?
2. If so, why? If not, why not?
3. How would you suggest they be improved?

Of 98 students all but one felt we should continue. This was a typical comment about why we should continue:

> Yes, I would like to see oral evaluations continue. I get a much better understanding of whether or not my paper is well written. You can explain things in detail whereas you couldn't simply by writing down comments. I also like being able to tell you what I think is wrong with my paper and learning if it is or it isn't.

To the question regarding suggested improvements, most students had none to suggest. Some, however, were frustrated that it took me five days to get to the last students. Others felt that I should have taken more time with each paper. Both of these were valid concerns, but I could solve these problems only by having smaller classes, a solution that was not in my power, unfortunately.

I do not purport that my informal survey is conclusive evidence that oral evaluation works. And, certainly, little in the professional literature either confirms or denies the effectiveness of oral evaluation. For example, the Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC) lists only one study, done from 1967 to 1980, and it was deemed inconclusive. But in my experience oral evaluation has increased appreciably the effectiveness of my teaching while decreasing the time I spend after school grading papers. No, I do not spend my extra time bike riding. (My bike is still in the garage, the old tires rotting.) I spend it doing lesson plans.

The teacher is a facilitator of the writing/learning process by creating an environment that is conducive to learning; assigning writing is not the same thing as teaching writing.

JAMES R. GRAY

Practical Ideas for Evaluation

Teaching Self-Evaluation Skills to Student Writers

By Carol O. Sweedler-Brown
Assistant Professor, Study Skills Center
San Diego State University

Most students find it especially difficult to evaluate their own writing because (1) they have had no training or practice in applying evaluation skills; (2) they are too close to their own writing to be able to deal with it objectively; and (3) it is very threatening to admit deficiencies in their own work. A couple of years ago I devised an exercise that helps my students overcome these problems.

During the third or fourth week of the semester, after my students have done some writing, but while they are still fairly green, I assign an in-class essay. I read these essays at home, and from each of my classes, I select three essays that present a range of writing problems and strengths. I duplicate enough of these model essays for one class and set them aside.

Four or five weeks later (using essays from one class as models for another class), I distribute these model papers to each class. Students are asked to read and grade these three essays without any prior discussion. After they have graded them, I write on the chalkboard the range and frequency of grades assigned to each essay. Then we discuss both the problems and strengths of each paper, and I put on the chalkboard the reasons students give for grading each paper as they did. Once the students have committed themselves to a grade, class discussion of the relative merits of these essays is often very lively, even raucus. At the end of the discussion, I have many evaluation criteria randomly jotted on the chalkboard—all directly suggested by the students. Then we organize these in broad categories—clarity, structure, content, grammar, and so forth—and decide which categories of criteria are more important than others in determining the overall grade of the paper. (So this activity also becomes an exercise in organizing and categorizing.) At this point, I emphasize to the students that they are capable of establishing valid standards for good writing.

At the next class meeting, I bring in the essays that my students wrote four or five weeks earlier. By this time, I have duplicated copies of the criteria established by the class, and I leave plenty of room on the sheets for comments after each criterion and a place for an overall grade. I staple four of these to the back of each essay, put a code number on each essay and its criteria sheets, and remove the student's name from the paper. I distribute the essays to the class. (If a student receives his or her own essay, he or she passes it to someone else.) The students then evaluate the essays on the criteria sheet by commenting about each criterion, making any other comments that seem appropriate, and assigning the paper an overall grade. After a student finishes grading a paper, he or she tears off the evaluation sheet, puts that in a pile, hands the essay to someone else, and takes another essay to grade. In this way, no one's grading can be influenced by the grading or comments of someone else. This process is repeated by all students until each essay has only one of the four criteria sheets left. Then the essay, with no marks on it, is given to the writer who fills in the final and most important evaluation.

At this point the writers are in an excellent position to evaluate their own writing because they have just had at least two days of training and practice in performing the evaluation process. In addition, because the student writers have not seen the paper for at least a month, they will have lost a close identification with it (some students hardly recognize their own papers). Since the students wrote the papers several weeks earlier, they are not as threatened by their shortcomings because they feel that they have improved.

After the students have evaluated their own papers (amidst groans and giggles, "Did I write this?"), I give them the three other evaluation sheets, and they compare their evaluations with those of their peers (unsigned). Usually, the assessments are surprisingly consistent. Then I ask the students to revise their essays in light of all the comments, especially their own. Some revisions will involve deep structural changes; and some, just mechanics.

I have found that this exercise shows students that they can determine what the qualities of good writing are, and they can apply evaluation techniques to their own essays as part of the revision stage of their writing.

The Writing Folder: A System for Responding to Students' Writing

By Jim Hahn
English Teacher, Fairfield High School,
Fairfield-Suisun Unified School District;
and Teacher/Consultant, Bay Area Writing Project

I have been marking papers and wrestling with the problem of responding to student writing for ten years. I have found that traditional systems of feedback trap us in the frustrating cycle of myriad comments and corrections aimed at students who continue to make the same errors. The frustration stems from these areas: there are too many papers to mark, the students do not read our comments, and the same students make the same errors again and again, regardless of how often we point them out. An analysis of the process of responding to students' writing will help illuminate some of the causes of these problems.

Part of the problem with providing feedback on papers is that we try to do too many things at once. If we take all the marks teachers put on students' papers, we could place them in three categories: (l) comments related to content and organization; (2) notations related to grammar, mechanics, and spelling; and (3) remarks related to evaluation. Each of these categories sends a different message to students. A comment on content implies that the students will rewrite the composition to correct the problem. A mark about grammar or mechanics implies that the students need to make minor corrections to solve the problems. Marks of evaluation, such as grades or even statements like "Good work," imply that the composition is finished. When we consider all of these areas simultaneously, we are telling our students (l) rewrite and rethink the paper; (2) correct the paper, but do not necessarily rethink it; and (3) the paper is finished. Given the three choices, it is no wonder that our students seldom do more than look at the grade. I shudder every time I think of the number of hours I spent commenting on student papers only to find them in the wastebasket soon after I passed them back.

The frustration teachers often feel after responding to and returning papers is easily explained when one realizes that students and teachers are both trying to save time while dealing with the difficult task of writing. On the one hand, teachers, pressed for time, develop shorthand methods for communicating with the student.

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On the other hand, students, who are also in a hurry, usually accept the grade, ignore the cryptic marks, relegate writing to the realm of things they will never master, and throw their papers in a nearby trash can.

If marking the papers for content and grammar and evaluating them should not be done simultaneously, then the next step is to find out when to do what. (See Figure 1 for a diagram showing what you may want to emphasize during each stage of the writing process.)

Comments about content and organization are pertinent at several stages in the process. They can help clarify thinking anywhere from the prewriting to the revising stages. The conventions of writing belong to the editing stage. If you make notations to your student writers regarding conventions (spelling, grammar, and so forth) too early in the process, they will correct the word or sentence; but then they often will find it very difficult to revise the content of the paper later because they are committed to the correct form, regardless of the sense (or nonsense) of the passage. Since evaluations, especially letter grades, imply that the work is finished, they should be used only at the end of the process.

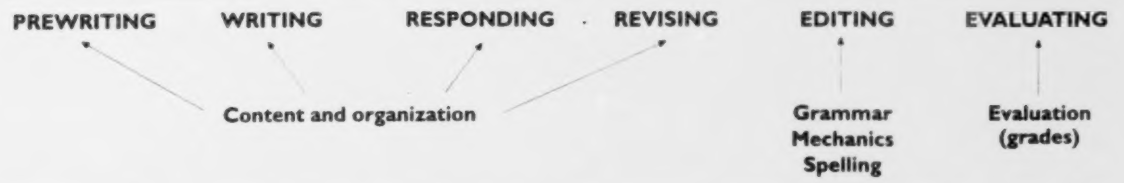

Fig. 1. Items to Emphasize in Each Stage of the Writing Process

Acceptance of the preceding analysis leads us overworked teachers to the unwelcome conclusion that instead of marking papers once, we should mark them three separate times, with the student making changes after each step. If I had to teach only one person to write, I might do that; however, with 150 to teach each semester, I look for options. I have designed a system for responding to writing at different stages in the composing process; and the system, which I will describe in the paragraphs that follow, provides students with feedback they can use and alleviates some of the burden of the paper load.

Students are constantly collapsing the writing process by taking shortcuts. Our job as teachers is to expand the process—to get students to think and rethink their work as much as possible. The writing process (and, consequently, the learning process) is kept open when evaluation is postponed as long as possible. Instituting writing folders for all written work helps accomplish this. Students often wish to throw out old papers. (If the papers have been graded, why should they be kept?) However, if the papers are evaluated en masse at the end of the grading period, the writing folders can be evaluated by the teacher or by the teacher and student in conference, or they can be self-evaluated by the student. The use of these folders has the added benefit of teaching students to be responsible for their work while demonstrating how much they have learned.

All of my students keep writing folders, which they must turn in to me at the end of a grading period (anywhere from two weeks to a semester in length) to get credit for their work. I collect these folders intermittently to provide feedback on the students' work, but I withhold grades until the end of the grading period. Before the students turn in work in progress for my review, I ask them to fill out a cover sheet that includes a self-evaluation of their paper, a classmate's comments on the piece, and a space for my response (see Figure 2).

You will note that the cover sheet (Figure 2) also requires the signature of three proofreaders. When we teachers correct our students' errors, we train them to be lazy proofreaders. I transfer this responsibility to the students by making them the editors of each other's work. In the same way that students gain an intuitive sense of the criteria for good writing by participating as peer respondents to the work of others, they can improve their grasp of grammatical concepts and mechanical rules when they must be attentive to the conventions of written English in their classmates' papers. When a question arises, I can always serve as a resource.

In order for the students to track their progress, I also have them use a paper log sheet that is kept in each student's folder (see Figure 3). Students transfer the comments from the cover sheets of individual papers (theirs, a peer partner's, and mine) to this cumulative log. Now, they can begin to see that writing is a craft that one can improve with practice. In addition to gaining ideas for revising specific pieces of writing, they can recognize how the assignments fit together as a sequence and determine what skills they need to strengthen in future papers.

All of my students' writing goes into their folders, but I do not necessarily read or evaluate everything. Much writing is only for practice, and some rough drafts are not meant to be final copies. I can spot-check the folders at intervals throughout the semester, establish a set grading period, and evaluate an entire body of work as a whole. I require that certain assignments be revised for evaluation, or I allow my students to select from

Cover Sheet

Name ______________________

Title ______________________

Date ______________________

Proofreaders

1. ______________________

2. ______________________

3. ______________________

Author's Comments

The thing I like most about this paper is ______________________

The thing I like least about this paper is ______________________

The things I tried to improve in this paper are ______________________

Student's comments ______________________

Teacher's comments ______________________

Things to work on in your next paper are ______________________

Fig. 2. Evaluation Sheet for Student's Writing

Name ______________________

Topic	Title	What I tried to improve	What I need to work on in my next paper

Fig. 3. Log of Student's Writing

their folders items for review that they believe represent their best work.

Once students become used to the writing folder and accept the idea that developing writing ability involves practice and that not every draft must be evaluated, teachers will no longer become "bottlenecks in the writing process," and students can write as much as they need to.

Adding an Analytical Commentary to Holistic Scoring

By Carol Booth Olson
Director, UCI Writing Project

I have found holistic scoring to be a fair, fast, and efficient method of providing comprehensible evaluative feedback on student papers. But, in its pure form, it does not allow for the descriptive feedback that most students need in order to determine what specific skills they should work on to improve future papers. Not only do students need this input, but I feel *guilty* if I do not provide them with it. It just does not seem equitable for a teacher to require students to write and then not respond with some form of written commentary of his or her own. On the other hand, I do not want to fall back into my old habit of spending hours writing essays in response to students' essays.

I think I have come up with a workable solution to this dilemma. I read each student's paper, give it a holistic score, and then fill out a form which breaks down the paper into its key elements: quality of thought, structure, diction, syntax, and so forth. Each assignment requires a slightly different form.

The categories for my analytical response sheet come straight from the rubric on which the paper is evaluated. For example, here is the scoring guide I developed for a 9—8 paper (on a 1—9 scale) for "A Sample Prompt, Scoring Guide, and Model Paper for the I-Search," which appears earlier in this book:

9—8 This paper is clearly superior. It is well written, clearly organized, insightful, and technically correct. A 9—8 paper exhibits most or all of the following characteristics:

- Writing the paper was a genuine learning experience for the writer, and a person would benefit greatly from reading the paper.
- The paper displays evidence of critical thinking and offers special insight into the topic discussed.
- The topic lends itself to investigation and discovery.
- The paper is written in three sections. (The format may be explicit or implicit.):
  - What I know, assume, or imagine (prior to the search)
  - The search (testing knowledge, assumptions, or conjecture through documented research)
  - What I discovered (comparing what you thought you knew with what you learned and offering commentary and conclusions)
- The author takes an active role rather than a passive role in the search.
- The writer uses research effectively as a supplement to, but not as a substitute for, his or her own ideas.
- The paper's tone and point of view convey a clear sense of the author's voice or style.
- The writer uses precise, apt, or descriptive language.
- The main points of the essay are well supported with examples.
- The writer uses ample transitions between ideas, paragraphs, and sections.
- The writer varies sentence structure and length.
- The search portion of the essay is properly documented with footnotes in correct form.
- The paper contains references to a minimum of two primary and two secondary research sources.
- The paper includes a formal bibliography.
- The writer generally uses effectively the conventions of written English.

I use an abbreviated list of the criteria from the scoring guide to establish the headings for my feedback:

Overall Comments and Suggestions
for Improvement
Paper as Learning Experience
Analysis of the Three Sections
Research (Quality and Quantity)

Support with Examples
Transition
Author's Role
Footnotes and Bibliography
Diction
Syntax
Conventions of Written English

Paper's score ______________________

Although I feel compelled to provide students with a written reaction to their work, I am also one of those people who eagerly embraces almost any opportunity to procrastinate. I find that having a response sheet makes the task of evaluating students' papers seem less formidable. I get to the job earlier and keep on task because the headings and the limited space provided (I try to keep the form to one page) necessitate that I keep focused and to the point. When filling out the form, I write a brief paragraph of four to five sentences in length in which I share my general reactions to the piece—in terms of both its strengths and its weaknesses. Beyond that initial remark, I do not feel obligated to write in complete sentences. If an "OK," "Nice work," or "More specific examples needed" will do, I leave it at that. If more explanation is required, then I provide it.

Adding an analytical commentary to holistic scoring has eased my conscience in regard to my responsibility to give students feedback on their written work. The method is certainly not as fast as using holistic scoring alone. But it is still more efficient than coming to each student's essay with a blank piece of paper and an undefined set of expectations, on the one hand, or an elaborate system of points for each component of the writing assignment, on the other. In my opinion, this combination is the best of both worlds.

Portfolio Assessment

By Catherine D'Aoust

Coordinator, Instructional Services,
Saddleback Valley Unified School District;
and Codirector, UCI Writing Project

One of the greatest challenges faced by writing teachers is assessment. Despite the fact that the National Writing Project and the writing reform movement in general have encouraged teachers to adopt a process approach to teaching composition, most teachers still rely solely on finished products to determine grades for students' writing. So, while the classroom pedagogy fosters the discovery and development of writing as a process—namely, the discovery by each student of his or her unique writing process—the assessment component continues to value only the final stage of that process. The challenge for today's teachers is how to grade students' writing in a way that reflects both the process and the product. One method that addresses these dual concerns is portfolio assessment.

Portfolios are more than just "storage bins" for students' papers. Borrowed from the tradition of portfolios in the arts, a writing portfolio is an ongoing representation of a student's ability to generate and craft thought. Through the portfolio, which contains numerous pieces of writing, the teacher has access to a student's processes as well as to her or his products. By piecing together numerous pieces of writing, the teacher begins to complete the puzzle of process and development in writing. The teacher has evidence of a student's writing as a process in generating ideas, taking risks, making errors, revising, and so forth. Rather than looking at a student's writing as an isolated *product*, the teacher can view in the portfolio the panorama of each student's struggle to capture and convey thought through writing.

Classroom writing portfolios seem to be taking one of two forms. *Process portfolios*, sometimes called *working* or *evolving* portfolios, are collections of all that a student writes over a period of time, which may be a quarter, a semester, a year, or several years. These portfolios include finished and unfinished pieces as well as ideas for future writing. They may include writing from a single subject area, or they may represent cross-curricular or thematic writing.

Another type of portfolio is the *exemplary portfolio*, sometimes called a *résumé* or *representative* portfolio. The writing in this portfolio represents the best writing by a student. It may include various pieces of writing in a particular genre or a representative piece from a variety of genres. The decision about what is "best" can be made by the student, the teacher, or a collaboration of both.

Often a teacher may use both types of portfolios. Students collect all their writing in the process portfolios; from that collection, they can create an exemplary portfolio. For example, the process portfolio may be a large manila folder that holds a brightly colored exemplary folder within it.

Within either type of portfolio, students often include *metacognitive responses* to their writing. These responses direct the student's attention to their writing and create awareness of their own processes. Through these responses, students listen to and learn from their inner voices as they become better writers. A metacognitive entry might describe the process a student used in generating a piece of writing, how the student overcame writer's block, how the student feels about himself or herself as a writer, what strategies the student will use in future writing, and so forth. The following are three examples of metacognitive responses from students at different grade levels:

> Joel wanted to see more "showing, not telling details" in my story. Sometimes, though, it is much better to tell. Often, in casual writing, we tell. When a book or story is told in first person like mine is, its point is to think like that person. Usually one doesn't talk or think in a show, not tell method. So, here it is better to tell as the first person sees things.
>
> *Karli—Eighth grade*

> The dialectal journal provided me with a relatively easy method by which I could get my initial thought formalized. Generally, this is a difficult step that requires much trial-and-error. But I now find that I can allow my thoughts to lead wherever they might—and still be able to find a "theme" within.
>
> *Arthur—12th grade*

> How do I transform my thoughts into writing? Hmm . . . I grasp onto one thing, a symbol, a moment, a color, a feeling. I feel and think with the camera eye. Then I mull and stew, compare it, contrast it, synthesize, humanize my symbol, hopefully twist it into a new shape or feeling, different from the trite. From there, I knock it out without thinking; then I go over and over and over it, rewrite. Mostly, if it is good, the guts are out on the page. My first write is 80% good or basic stuff; then a lot of throwing out goes on. Finally, I edit, but it is a two-week process. I live inside of it. Sometimes, I go into great pain—and I know it because it is part of the process. But when I really write something good, the child in me feels a certain awe and wonder (I'm still a knobby-kneed little kid about it), and I am pleased. I feel as if I have shared or done something, so I trudge on willingly.
>
> *Cris—University*

In some cases, the teacher determines what types and how many pieces of writing are included in the portfolio. Other teachers believe that the power of the portfolio resides in each student's making that choice. In this situation, a teacher asks students to choose for their exemplary portfolios those pieces that are representative of their progress as writers. The degree of direction provided by the teacher depends on the needs of the students, and, of course, on the reason for using portfolios in the first place. In both instances, a major strength of the portfolio is that students can "travel" through their portfolios, review their writing over a period of time, and gain an understanding of themselves as writers.

Teachers grade portfolios in a number of ways. Some teachers give points for everything that is included in the process portfolio: prewriting activities, first drafts, revisions, final products, unfinished products, metacognitive entries, and so forth. Other teachers grade all finished products but have students choose those which will be included in their exemplary portfolios. Their final grade becomes the average of the graded products in their portfolios. In some instances, the teacher encourages students to evaluate their own writing, and the final grade is a collaboration between the teacher and the student. If the assessment is to be authentic and legitimate, it should be the natural outcome of a process in which students generate both finished and unfinished texts, experiment and take risks, discover more about themselves as writers, and gain confidence as writers.

Portfolios are not just "containers" for a year's samples of writing. Besides providing a means of addressing the assessment issues of process and product, they are also symbols of students' struggles with the written word and of their eventual victories. Finally, portfolios provide students tangible proof that they are, indeed, writers.

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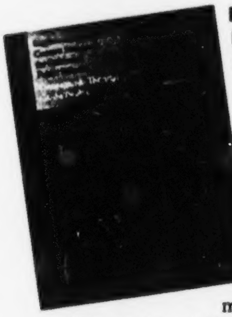
Publications Available from the Department of Education

This listing of publications represents some of the more recent or most widely used English-language arts publications from the California Department of Education.

Educating English Learners for the Twenty-First Century: The Report of the Proposition 227 Task Force

This report contains the guiding principles and the recommendations of the State Superintendent of Public Instruction's Proposition 227 Task Force. The recommendations will help many segments of the education system work toward a vision of education that allows students to have high-quality English-language acquisition programs and content instruction so that they can achieve their full intellectual capacity. The task force recommendations are designed for both immediate and long-term action.

1999, 62 pp., illus.
Item No. 1476—$10.50



English–Language Arts Content Standards for California Public Schools, Kindergarten Through Grade Twelve

This document presents the skills and knowledge to be learned and the type of work to be done at each grade level in reading, writing, listening, and speaking. These standards were adopted by the State Board of Education in 1997 and were designed to encourage the highest achievement of every student in California.

1998, 96 pp.
Item No. 1389—$9.25

Every Child a Reader: The Report of the California Reading Task Force

This report contains the recommendations of the California Reading Task Force in response to the number of children in California who are not learning to read. These recommendations are for both immediate and long-term action so that "every student might leave the third grade no longer learning to read, but reading to learn." A "Sample Reading Curriculum Timeline" and a selected bibliography are included.

1995, 32 pp.
Item No. 1244—$5.25

Literature for History–Social Science, K–8

This resource complements the *History–Social Science Framework.* The annotated lists of historical fiction, biography, original source materials, fables, folktales, fairy tales, poetry, plays, and songs are aligned with the course descriptions and units for each K–8 grade in the framework.

1993, 128 pp., illus.
Item No. 1107—$9.00

Literature for Science and Mathematics, K–12

Intended as companion to both the 1990 *Science Framework* and the 1992 *Mathematics Framework,* this literature list is divided into four sections: Physical Science, Earth Science, Life Science, and Mathematics. Entries include descriptive annotations with appropriate grade levels and are indexed by title, author, and subject. Appendixes offer suggestions for integrating literature into the curriculum.

1993, 152 pp., illus.
Item No. 1066—$11.00

Literature for the Visual and Performing Arts, Kindergarten Through Grade Twelve

Each of the four sections—"Dance," "Music," "Theatre," and "Visual Arts"—includes an annotated bibliography of resources related to that discipline. An accompanying grid identifies for each title (1) focus of the literature; (2) suggested grade level; (3) related discipline, if applicable; and (4) the relevant *Framework* component.

1996, 80 pp.
Item No. 1266—$10.25

Mathematics Framework for California Public Schools, Kindergarten Through Grade Twelve, 2000 Revised Edition

The *Mathematics Framework* focuses on the mathematics content standards adopted by the California State Board of Education. Mathematical problems illustrate the interrelationships among computational and procedural skills, conceptual understanding, and problem solving. The framework addresses the needs of all learners and highlights the importance of mathematical reasoning and of frequent assessment. A glossary of terms and a list of resources are included.

2000, 342 pp.
Item No. 1508—$17.50

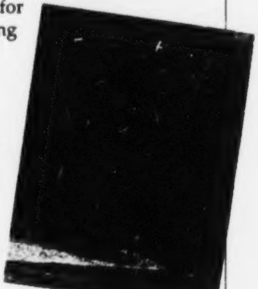
Practical Ideas for Teaching Writing as a Process at the Elementary School and Middle School Levels

Practical Ideas contains a collection of specific classroom strategies and suggestions for teaching writing according to the following process: prewriting, writing, sharing/responding, revising, editing, and evaluating.

New selections include reader response strategies, ideas for infusing cooperative learning into the classroom, multiple intelligence projects, portfolio assessment and reflection, and an array of interactive strategies to help culturally diverse and limited-English-proficient students.

1996, 320 pp., illus.
Item No. 1221—$18.00

Reading/Language Arts Framework for California Public Schools, Kindergarten Through Grade Twelve



A blueprint for implementing California's rigorous English–language arts content standards, this long-awaited framework relies heavily on converging research in beginning reading. In addition to emphasizing reading, the framework focuses on writing, speaking, listening, and written and oral English-language conventions for all learners and across all grade levels. It describes the curriculum and instruction necessary to help students achieve progressive levels of mastery so that they may communicate effectively in English and, ultimately, participate fully in society and the world of work. A glossary of selected terms and list of references are included.

1999, 304 pp., illus.
Item No. 1462—$17.50

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Read to Me: Recommended Literature for Children Ages Two Through Seven

This carefully selected and annotated listing of more than 400 titles was compiled for the benefit of "young children who are just beginning the . . . joyous and rewarding road to achieving full literacy" (Preface). Parents, teachers, librarians, and early childhood caregivers will discover a valuable resource for developing children's appreciation for good literature.

1992, 144 pp., illus.
Item No. 1048—$9.00

Recommended Literature, Grades 9–12

Designed to complement the *English–Language Arts Model Curriculum Standards, Grades 9–12,* this reading list of more than 1,200 titles will help teachers guide their high school students to the best literature. The entries represent classical and contemporary works of fiction, nonfiction, poetry, and drama.

1990, 118 pp., illus.
Item No. 0831—$8.00

Recommended Readings in Literature, K–8 (Revised Annotated Edition)

This publication is designed to encourage schoolchildren to read and to view reading as a worthwhile activity; help local curriculum planners select books for their reading programs; and stimulate educators to evaluate and improve their literature programs. More than 1,000 titles represent the finest works of fiction, nonfiction, poetry, and drama. The literary contributions of specific ethnic and cultural groups are represented.

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